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Displaying Race at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition

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DISPLAYING RACE AT THE JAMESTOWN TER-CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION

by

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B.A. December 2007, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

DISPLAYING RACE AT THE JAMESTOWN TER-CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION

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Old Dominion University, 2016
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World expositions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century often displayed the latest anthropological, ethnological, biological, and technological research on race and ethnicity, promoting the view that whites were superior to all other peoples. The Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition of 1907, held in Norfolk, Virginia to commemorate the three-hundred anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown settlement and its contribution to the building of the United States, offers an opportunity to examine American perspectives on whiteness, race, and society.

First, the Jamestown Exposition offered a glimpse into the historical memory of white America, especially the influential citizens that comprised the controlling entity behind the event, the Jamestown Exposition Company, as they determined how to commemorate the founding of Jamestown, United States history, and race and ethnicity. Second, the event offered a view of race relations in the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century, as several components of the exposition displayed information about minorities and persons of color in the United States and around the world, placing them in the dominant, white narrative offered in the records, histories, souvenirs, and exhibits of the event. Third, the Jamestown Exposition offered a window into the growing movement to advance the rights and status of African Americans, as evidenced by the efforts of the Negro Development and Exposition Company (N.D.E.C.), which used its building and exhibits to provide a more accurate and less biased history of African

Americans and promote the view that they were industrious, competent, and worthy of equal status with white Americans.

The Jamestown Exposition reflected the dominant narrative of race in the United States, created and controlled by white Americans and promoting the view that whites were superior. While exhibitions included commemorations of American Indians and displayed various peoples such as Filipinos, the central focus of this thesis is the African American attempt to take control of the display of their race rather than allow the Jamestown Exposition Company and white Americans to perpetuate their racist views. African Americans who participated in the Jamestown Exposition sought to overcome the overwhelming racism from white Americans by taking matters into their own hands and illustrating their worth and equality through education exhibits. Ultimately, the narrative of white superiority, scientific racism, and nonwhite exploitation dominated the event, included in the exhibits, guides, histories, and souvenirs of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Ter-Centennial Jamestown Exposition, which opened April 26, 1907, and closed November 30, 1907, sought to commemorate and celebrate “the three hundredth anniversary of the first English-speaking settlement” in North America and the birth of the United States.¹ Harry St. George Tucker, the president of the Jamestown Exposition Company, opened the official account of the event by confirming the company’s mission, stating that “the original conception of those who projected the Exposition was to celebrate in a fitting manner the Ter-Centennial of the birth of the Nation.”² Moreover, President Theodore Roosevelt authorized the event in a Proclamation “for the purpose of commemorating, in a fitting and appropriate manner, the birth of the American nation, the first permanent settlement of English-speaking people on the American continent, made at Jamestown, Va., on the 13th of May, 1607, and in order that the great events of American history which have resulted therefrom may be accentuated to the present and future generations of American citizens.”³

The original purpose was quickly muddled as the event’s focus broadened during the planning process to include a commemoration of the entire history of the nation’s development and a celebration of the growing military prowess and international standing of the United States. Most of the historical research and published work on the Jamestown Exposition has focused on its commemoration of the founding of the first permanent English speaking settlement in North

¹ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission, Message from the President of the United States, transmitting the final report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission embodying reports of various officers of the Jamestown Exposition held at Norfolk, Virginia, in 1907*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, U.S. Congressional Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 1523 February, 1909, 9.

² Charles Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, A.D. 1907* (Norfolk, VA: the Colonial Publishing Company, 1909), 1.

³ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 15-16.

America at Jamestown in 1607 or the event's celebration of naval and maritime accomplishments of the United States, a nation in the midst of imperial expansion and growing international power. An aspect ripe for deeper exploration is the way in which the 1907 Jamestown Exposition exhibited and displayed race. While most of the exhibits at the event centered on the accomplishments of white Americans and perpetuated the dominant white narrative of United States history, there were varying acknowledgments of other races, ranging from commemorations of American Indians and exhibits featuring Filipinos to exhibits created and controlled by African Americans. The Jamestown Exposition provided a glimpse into the ways in which race divided and captivated Americans. Within the walls and on the grounds of the Victorian and Edwardian era world's fairs and expositions, including the Ter-Centennial Jamestown Exposition of 1907, the racial divisions outside the fairgrounds were featured by excited organizers seeking to sell tickets and, in the process, often exploiting minorities and ignoring their contributions to the United States. Indeed, the Jamestown Exposition offered the opportunity to influence, sway, and educate the visitors with each souvenir, exhibit and attraction.

This thesis seeks to determine how the Jamestown Exposition presented the racially tense period of the early twentieth century and the colonial origins of the United States at Jamestown by their showcases and other materials on race. The Negro building and its exhibits on African Americans challenged the dominant narrative of the Jamestown Exposition and the United States by starkly contrasting the white majority of the Ter-Centennial celebration with the efforts of African Americans and the Negro Development and Exposition Company, N.D.E.C., offer a fascinating glimpse into the movement to advance African American economic, political, and social rights in the United States.

The Jamestown Exposition celebrated and helped to perpetuate the traditional white narrative of United States history while simultaneously commemorating the conquering of American Indians and Filipinos. The only featured exhibit on African Americans was segregated.

The Exposition framed the founding of Jamestown as the beginning of an exceptional United States and celebrated American identity in whiteness and Anglo-Saxon heritage. In most cases, the exhibits and commemorations of persons of color focused exclusively on their interaction with white Anglo-American colonists. Furthermore, the focus on race at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, much like other fairs of the era, supports the assertion that white American visitors viewed persons of color with curiosity and fascination, known as exoticism, despite viewing American Indians, African Americans, or Filipinos as lesser than whites Americans. Moreover, the segregation of the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building confirmed and helped foster societal and institutional racism inside and outside the grounds of the event.

Race was at the forefront of the American mind at the start of the twentieth century for a variety of reasons, and the 1907 Jamestown Exposition largely endorsed those pre-existing racial divisions. Relationships between different races in the early twentieth century United States were tense and controlled by whites in an effectively white supremacist nation, particularly in the Jim Crow South. Though the term "Jim Crow" was eventually used to characterize the post-Reconstruction state of race relations in the American South, "Jim Crow" originated from early nineteenth century blackface minstrel shows in which white stage actors blackened their face with burned cork, dressed in tattered clothing, smiled widely, and imitated the stereotypical behavior of black Americans.⁴ After being inspired by a routine performed in 1828 by an elderly and crippled Louisville stableman belonging to a Mr. Crow," Thomas Rice spread the term "Jim

⁴ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 11.

Crow” through his popular performance called “Jump Jim Crow,” in which he danced and sang: “Weel about, and turn about / And do jis so; / Eb’ry time I weel about, / I jump Jim Crow.”⁵

Though the term “Jim Crow” was well known to mid-nineteenth century northern and southern American audiences due to the popularity of minstrel shows and “Jump Jim Crow,” historian Leon F. Litwack acknowledged that it is unclear how minstrel dance came to be the preferred descriptor of a white designed system of segregation and discrimination against blacks.

Nevertheless, “Jim Crow” was widely used to signify the segregation and subordination of black Americans in the South by law and custom.⁶

White attitudes regarding race formed from a wide array of things, including the historical standing of race relations in the country, social Darwinism, and popular racist sciences that often viewed whites as biologically superior, including phrenology, ethnology, anthropology, eugenics, and other ideologies that promoted racism and discriminatory policies. Moreover, Southern discrimination was restored when the Compromise of 1877 officially ending Reconstruction with the end of federal enforcement of post-Civil War achievements such as the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments and the movement to subordinate African Americans. While former Confederate states resisted Republican Party led Reconstruction in the South well before 1877, the end of federal Reconstruction permitted those states to implement discriminatory policies unchecked, leading to the emergence of the “Jim Crow” era with the enactment of black codes, the economic subjugation of African Americans through sharecropping, and the gradual codification of segregation and disenfranchisement policies across the South.

⁵ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 11.

⁶ Ibid, 11-12.

For instance, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, which hosted the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition in 1907, a convention held in 1901 deliberately disenfranchised African Americans.⁷ The convention devised a series of laws to that took effect in 1904, including registration requirements, payment of a poll tax, and an “understanding” clause, which required eligible voters to explain an excerpt of the Virginia state constitution to a registrar or member of the voter registration board.⁸ Though the “understanding” clause was controversial due to the fear of some that it would unintentionally disenfranchise some illiterate white male voters, the members of the convention determined that any registrar would purposely administer the “understanding” clause examination unfairly to black male Virginians and in a friendly manner to white males to ensure their eligibility.⁹ Thus, the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition occurred in the midst of the most racially divided era in Virginia and the United States, and the Jamestown Exposition Company actively supported the narrative of white supremacy and black subordination.

Yet, at least one exhibit was firmly determined to tear down racial divisions and promote an equal view of minority races in white supremacist America by displaying their history and accomplishments. The Negro Development and Exposition Company, (hereafter to be referred to as the N.D.E.C.), created an African American exhibit that challenged the dominant, white narrative of American history and served as a powerful form of activism and an instrument to advance black agency in the United States. The N.D.E.C. building, with enclosed exhibits to promote education and agency for African Americans, supported their economic, political, and social advancement in the United States. Not all activists seeking to advance the rights of African Americans agreed with the N.D.E.C.’s tactics or even its participation in the Jamestown

⁷ John J. Dinan, *The Virginia State Constitution*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Exposition, but the exhibit was a powerful tool for a few reasons. First, the N.D.E.C. Building and its exhibits were not managed by white Americans, but instead were imagined and created by African Americans, providing them an opportunity to choose how to tell the story and history of their people. Second, the N.D.E.C. exhibits offered visitors an opportunity to view the awesome architectural, artistic, literary, technological, and other achievements of African Americans that, otherwise, would not be seen. The N.D.E.C. hoped the exhibits would help change visitors' negative opinions of African Americans. Third, the Negro Building of the Jamestown Exposition Company offered an opportunity for African Americans to set the record straight by challenging the prejudiced white narrative of American history that maligned or omitted African Americans, and enabled them to advocate for their advancement through education. Thus, the efforts of the N.D.E.C. add a unique dimension to the display of race at the Jamestown Exposition.

The historiography on the world's fairs and expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century offers a useful framework for this study of the Jamestown Exposition of 1907. Though Jamestown Exposition Company President Harry St. George Tucker stated that the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition was not designed or intended to compete with the fairs and expositions of the recent past, there is no doubt that the company drew inspiration from previous fairs across the western world, including Paris, Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans.¹⁰ In fact, historical studies on world's fairs offers a helpful starting point for assessing the Jamestown Exposition because fairs often mimicked one another's exhibits and attractions. Historian Robert Rydell characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a "world of fairs" due to the abundance of popular international expositions staged in Philadelphia, New Orleans, Saint Louis, Chicago, Atlanta and many other locations in the United States and

¹⁰ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, A.D. 1907*, 1.

Western Europe celebrating various historical events, and technological, artistic, and militaristic and imperialistic achievements.¹¹ Most historical studies confirm that fairs and expositions, including the Jamestown Exposition, had a powerful effect on visitors that both reinforced and informed their beliefs about the world and peoples surrounding them. Thus, historians who have studied the relationship between fairs and race, including Robert Rydell and Mabel Wilson, serve as the backbone and a helpful comparative reference for this study of the Jamestown Exposition.

In *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, historian Robert Rydell affirmed the popular influence of events such as the Jamestown Exposition when he wrote that fairs “failed to provide a vision that all who experienced them shared equally, they did deeply influence the content of many individual and collective beliefs and values.”¹² According to *Meet Me at the Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, world's fairs and expositions have largely been studied from the standpoint of their imperialist and capitalist motivations since the 1980s, promoting the view that fairs and expositions were created to “display the power of state imperialism” and to reinforce “dominant narratives of race, gender, class, progress, capitalism, and globalization.”¹³ The dominant narratives were undoubtedly dictated by whites within the United States, thus providing a unique opportunity to study the race displays at the fairs and expositions of the era. According to Rydell, the “expositions offered millions of fairgoers an opportunity to reaffirm their collective national identity in an updated synthesis of progress and white supremacy that suffused the blueprints of future perfection offered by the fairs.”¹⁴ Additionally, many of the fairs and expositions in the

¹¹ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4.

¹² Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 3.

¹³ Laura H. Hollengreen and Rebecca Rouse, “Introduction,” in *Meet Me at the Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, edited by Celia Pearce, Bobby Schweizer, Laura Hollengreen, and Rebecca Rouse (Pittsburg, PA: Carnegie Mellon University's ETC Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁴ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 4.

United States mimicked the exhibitions and anthropological events in Europe, which reinforced nineteenth and early twentieth century conceptions of race and Social Darwinism and promoted “fundamentally hierarchical, racist, and evolutionary arrangements of the worldly peoples.”¹⁵

While there was a fundamental ethnological and anthropological element to displaying nonwhite people at these events while portraying them as fundamentally different from white Britons or white Americans, there was also “intercultural encounters,” as visitors and patrons sought not only entertainment, but also opportunities for discussion of issues including “foreign policy, missionary zeal” and imperialism.¹⁶

The growing confidence and nationalism of Americans was on display at world’s fairs during an era of thriving American imperial ambition, as evidenced by the 1898 victory in the Spanish American War, acquisition of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Cuba, the annexation of Hawaii, and a growing global network of military, coaling, and trading stations. As the international reputation of the United States grew, many Americans sought to trace and celebrate the historical path to greatness and world power. World’s fairs and expositions often served as commemorative events that “paraded the nation’s history as the natural outcome of an exceptional people destined to be great” and the “powerful white politicians, manufacturers, and transportation titans who set the ideological tone for the expositions (and who also funded the great museums) put the world - from primitive to civilized - on display so that the common sense of nation, race, and class could be known by those privileged to witness the spectacles.”¹⁷ Thus, the world’s fairs and expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “reinforced beliefs that historically nonwhite peoples belonged in the lower ranks of civilization and the

¹⁵ Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁶ Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, 8.

¹⁷ Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 6.

nation's advance" simply by determining who to exclude or portray negatively (nonwhite) and who was featured (white Americans).¹⁸

Rydell's assessment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century fairs applies to the Jamestown Exposition as the controlling entity, the Jamestown Exposition Company, promoted white centric views and portrayed minorities or persons of colors as inferior. Like many Americans and his successor in power during the Jamestown Exposition, President William McKinley believed that fairs illustrated and celebrated advancement and progress in the United States, stating at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York that fairs "record the world's advancement" and were "the timekeepers of progress."¹⁹ President McKinley defined progress as "American's material growth and economic expansion" providing the rationale for the growing imperial empire of the United States overseas.²⁰ Yet, every single imperial action of the United States had racist overtones. Rydell summed it up perfectly when he stated that American economic and empire expansion "was predicated on the subordination of nonwhite people."²¹ Thus, at expositions and fairs that celebrated American imperial success, including the Jamestown Exposition, race was an essential component. Rydell stated that though the lion's share of fairs and expositions during the era offered a variety of exhibits and activities, they were "inseparable from the larger constellation of ideas about race, nationality, and progress that molded the fairs into ideologically coherent symbolic universes confirming and extending the authority of the country's corporate, political, and scientific leadership."²² Exhibits featuring race often blended scientific racism with explanations for the economic, industrial, scientific, and

¹⁸ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 7.

¹⁹ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 2.

imperial progress of the United States.²³ Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage stated that “ever since the 1851 London exposition at the Crystal Palace, a succession of international expositions fused scientific classificatory schemes with spectacular celebrations of technology, progress, and civilization” and, ultimately, world’s fairs “served as venues in which authoritative scientific ideas about evolution, race, and culture were disseminated from academic circles to the level of popular consumption.”²⁴ The United States of this era was “imbued with racist ideas” and world’s fairs and expositions did their part to popularize “evolutionary ideas about race and progress” that were promoted by scientists and ethnologists during the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century.²⁵

Rydell’s assertion that scientific racism was an inherent part of the version of American progress celebrated at fairs serves as a pillar of historiographic support for this thesis. Race and color divisions were visible in several exhibits and the overall narrative of the Jamestown Exposition. Many of the event’s components, including exhibits, promotional material, histories, speeches, and souvenirs, perpetuated racism and division by endorsing the skewed and narrow view that white, Anglo-Saxon, English speaking heritage was the true foundation of American people, United States democracy, and the nation’s progress. Furthermore, non-whites or minorities were often neglected or selectively included only in the context of their interaction with whites in an effort to glorify the white narrative of United States history. For instance, one guide to the Exposition, the *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition, Historic Virginia, and Washington* proudly stated: “the men who were to colonize Virginia pursued their voyage to the end and landed at Jamestown and to them is due the United States, and to them also is due a

²³ Ibid., 5.

²⁴ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’ and (Re)Presenting African American Historical Memory,” *The Journal of American History* 89, 4 (2003): 1370.

²⁵ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 5.

much larger meed of glory, namely, the credit of sowing the seed whose plant was to grow and spread.”²⁶ Yet, notably absent were the contributions of African Americans and American Indians to the development and success of the nation. This white-washing of history at the Jamestown Exposition and like events contributed to a misinformed and racially divided United States.

Historian Mabel Wilson concurred with Rydell, stating that fairs often promoted the view that “Asians, American Indians, Africans, and American Negroes” were “deemed exploitable for their resources and labor” and “black peoples were incapable of reason and judgment and therefore were unworthy of basic human and democratic rights.”²⁷ Indeed, according to Rydell, fairs were not just inspired by ethnological studies, but also different popular entertainment forms including the “zoological garden, the minstrel show, the circus, the museum of curiosities, the dime novel, and the Wild West show” making expositions and fairs a “part of a broader universe of white supremacist entertainments.”²⁸ He acknowledged that it is difficult to determine how important fairs were to forming the ideas of Americans about racial beliefs, but believed them to be “among the most authoritative” because the events provided “justification for long-standing racial prejudices” and were “vehicles that endowed popular racial attitudes with apparent scientific credibility.”²⁹ Brundage explained the influence of world exposition sponsors by stating that they organized “the world into representable categories that, not coincidentally, advanced the imperial purpose, strengthened national identities, and inscribed

²⁶ *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition, Historic Virginia, and Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Byron. S Adams, 1907), 30.

²⁷ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 7.

²⁸ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 6.

²⁹ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 6.

ideas about the essential otherness of ‘primitive’ societies and peoples” in comparison to the culture of the United States.³⁰

Furthermore, accounts of history are at the mercy of its writers and their perspective can result in a distorted or erroneous interpretation of events. The history of the United States and its people has changed dramatically over time and was largely controlled by white Americans before and during the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition. Historian David Blight described the age-old struggle over the historical record, stating that “blacks and whites — historians as well as other professionals, along with front-porch observers — have been engaged in a struggle over what to say about America’s past and how to say it.”³¹ When thinking about the bias, agenda, or misinterpreted narrative of the past, it is important to remember that “historians are storytellers after all, concerned with introducing characters and shaping their stories with some sense of the rhetoric needed to confront their audience’s expectations and to bring the past to life.”³²

Many white Americans, especially in the South, constructed a historical memory of the American Civil War that promoted the beliefs of the Lost Cause, including glorifying the efforts and goals of the Confederate States of America as heroic, and completely ignoring or downplaying the experience and voice of the former slaves and the importance of emancipation. The Dunning School of Civil War and Reconstruction history, started by William Dunning and John W. Burgess, actively sought to rewrite history with a racist interpretation that emphasized “negro incapacity,” dismissed and vilified African American political participation after the Civil War, and characterized the South as a victim of Northern aggression. It also falsely depicted

³⁰ Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’”, 1370.

³¹ Robert O’Meally and Geneviève Fabre, “Introduction,” in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. Robert O’Meally and Geneviève Fabre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

³² O’Meally and Fabre, “Introduction,” in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, 6.

African Americans as incapable blacks that “threatened the stability of civilized society.”³³ In the minds of most white Americans, the Dunning School narrative justified the injustices perpetrated on the newly emancipated African American community as the Reconstruction period drew to a close in the 1870s, referred to as “home rule,” and which historian Eric Foner recognized simply as “a euphemism for white supremacy.”³⁴ Thus, education, or rather setting the historical narrative straight, became one primary tactic for combating white supremacy and promoting African American rights and equality in the United States.

The process of writing a historical narrative of American history that accurately accounted for minorities did not gain substantial momentum until the modern civil rights movement after the Second World War, but certainly accounts by individual and communities of minorities. For instance, in the case of African Americans, Blight speculated that “the first black American historians may have been the authors of slave narratives, those whose testimonies comprised not only eyewitness accounts of remembered experience but also a set of worldviews, and indeed at many points around the compass, memory and history come together.”³⁵

While most Americans subscribed to the overwhelmingly well-circulated historical narrative of the United States that was written and controlled by white Americans, each exhibit and account that featured African Americans incrementally helped challenge the white narrative. For instance, the narratives written and spread by Frederick Douglas and W.E.B. DuBois challenged the white narrative and “countered the romance of the Lost Cause and national

³³ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1988), xvii-xviii.

³⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, xvii-xviii.

³⁵ David Blight, in O'Meally and Fabre, “Introduction,” in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, 6.

reunion” that was quite popular beginning after the Civil War and well into the twentieth century.³⁶

Historian Thavolia Glymph wrote that though “we know little about the processes by which slaves, and later freed people, came to understand the world beyond the plantations and farms on which most spent their entire lives” and “forged a sense of themselves as a community of Afro-Americans” we do know that “for decades following the Civil War, black people met annually to celebrate freedom, to proclaim to each other the progress they had made, and to outline the struggle that remained.”³⁷ Glymph went on to explain that by the start of the twentieth century, when white Americans “were being called to remember the Civil War as a noble endeavor, former slaves gathered at Emancipation and Independence Day celebrations, church anniversaries, and political rallies to cheer a far different interpretation of the war, a far more radical vision of its meaning.” These meetings “helped transform individual memories into a collective community historical memory.”³⁸ Even though the physical fighting of the Civil War ended, the battle over history and memory ensued. White America and, in particular, the South, “continued to control much of black people’s world but black people’s memories of the Civil War and emancipation pressed against that control” and though African American accounts of their own history would not end Jim Crow era racism, segregation, and disenfranchisement, they did contribute to black nationalism, increase black agency, and, ultimately, fight the white narrative that excluded black Americans or promoted racism.³⁹

³⁶ David Blight, “Du Bois and the Struggle for American Historical Memory,” in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. Robert O’Meally and Geneviève Fabre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 46.

³⁷ Thavolia Glymph, “‘Liberty Dearly Bought’: The Making of Civil War Memory in Afro-American Communities in the South,” in *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Adam Green (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 114-115.

³⁸ Glymph, “‘Liberty Dearly Bought’”, 115.

³⁹ Glymph, “‘Liberty Dearly Bought’”, 130.

The mission of educating the public and promoting the true history and account of African Americans was an important component of the Jamestown Exposition, despite the fact that the N.D.E.C. was not the first to use African Americans exhibits at world's fairs as an activism tactic. "Black Americans used the fairs to vigorously respond to how they were being portrayed and positioned" by seeking to disprove "the bleak forecasts augured by their fellow white citizens by taking measure of their own advancement." At mainstream fairs, such as the Jamestown Exposition, and Emancipation expositions "black citizens could witness their own progress as a race and a nation."⁴⁰ The N.D.E.C. building and enclosed exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition followed black exhibits at world's fairs in Paris and Charleston harnessing educative exhibits to promote equality and end the mistreatment of African Americans. Historian Mabel Wilson suggested that many African American leaders deployed Booker T. Washington's "strategy of accommodation and utilized major fairs planned for Charleston in 1902 and Jamestown in 1907 to foster white confidence in their industriousness and obedience."⁴¹ The efforts of the N.D.E.C. and other groups of black citizens "formulated bold counternarratives to American progress."⁴² The power of education as a tool for political activism extends well beyond convincing whites that African Americans were industrious and obedient. It challenged the mainstream, white narrative of history that blighted or ignored African Americans.

This examination of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition is outlined below. The second chapter will focus on a more involved examination of the ways in which race and racism were on display at world's fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and establishing the status of race relations in the United States around 1907. While secondary sources that evaluated world's fairs of the era are leaned on heavily, there is an emphasis

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

codified discriminatory policies of the seventeenth century and early twentieth century that offer insight into the racial views of whites and the extraordinary strain on race relations in both periods. The third chapter focuses solely on the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition and establishes a better understanding of the event's purpose and exhibits. *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition*, published just after the event, proved especially useful in providing an overview of the event's exhibits and features. Other visitor souvenir and event guides, newspaper articles, and secondary sources provide a full picture of the exposition. The third chapter also focuses on the ways in which American Indians, Filipinos, and other peoples outside of white America were commemorated and displayed at the Jamestown Exposition. The fourth chapter details the efforts of the N.D.E.C. and its exhibits on African Americans. Giles Jackson and D. Webster Davis' *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States* provided extraordinary insight into the goals and efforts of the N.D.E.C. as did the official accounts of the Jamestown Exposition and visitor accounts of the exhibits. Finally, the conclusion and epilogue chapter assesses the ways in which the Jamestown Exposition displayed and portrayed race and briefly looks at subsequent commemoration of the founding of Jamestown and colonial British North America. The Jamestown Exposition propagated racism in the United States by featuring and celebrating the nation's white history and exoticizing persons of color. The N.D.E.C., however, fought to participate in the fair to challenge the prevailing racism of the fair and promote the equality of African Americans by displaying their many contributions to the nation.

CHAPTER II

RACE RELATIONS IN 1607 AND 1907

This chapter explores the relationship between the prejudice and racism that characterized race relations in the United States in both the year of the Jamestown Exposition, 1907, and the year which they commemorated 1607. It establishes a degree of continuity between the state of race relations in 1607 and 1907 and examines and compares race relations in the seventeenth century with race relations in the early twentieth century. Striking similarities emerge between the English perspective on race and their regard for American Indians and Africans and white United States citizens' views of African Americans and memories of the American Indians of the colonial period. English racism toward Africans and American Indians in 1607 and white American racism toward persons of color in 1907 was based on different ideologies and views, but similar in that different skin color was used to justify discrimination.

Rarely, if ever, did historical accounts of early Virginia colonization that were popular around 1907 include facts or stories about American Indians assisting English settlers. Accounts of American Indians assisting English with knowledge of the terrain or trading or helping them survive by providing early colonists with hunting skills, farming and cultivation techniques, or providing food staples indigenous to North America were most often neglected or glossed over. Instead, the official exhibits of the Jamestown Exposition and the historical accounts published to help commemorate the ter-centennial focused on the English perspective and the tales of struggle followed by triumphant conquest. Additionally, commemorative historical accounts for the ter-centennial never acknowledged the fundamental cultural differences between the English and American Indians that created much of the conflict between the two groups upon interaction.

However, acknowledgment of American Indian cultural traditions that English invaders disrespected, such as their differing understandings of land and ownership, would insinuate guilt on the part of white Englishmen, which would go against the narrative of white English superiority and American exceptionalism. The only story of American Indian assistance to the narrative of English conquest in the Americas was the dramatization of Pocahontas saving John Smith from certain death by American Indians. In this often-cited story, Pocahontas saved Smith from certain murder by American Indians portrayed as savage and, later, the English saved Pocahontas through conversion to Christianity. Thus, the Pocahontas story served as a lens on white, English conquest and cultural superiority. The widespread mischaracterization of American Indians in 1907 was reminiscent of the initial judgements of American Indians made by English settlers at Jamestown in the seventeenth century.

White Americans supported and propagated derogatory views of American Indians through the written histories, speeches, exhibits and concessions at the Jamestown Exposition. Racist and demeaning descriptions of American Indians, including the use of descriptors such as savage, backwards, and uncivilized, were repeated rather than corrected by the Jamestown Exposition. While many accurate dates, names, and events appeared in the histories offered by the Jamestown Exposition, the skewed view that the historical accounts presented neglected the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon American Indians by white English colonists, including the spread of disease, warfare, and efforts to circumvent or destroy American Indian belief systems and land use policies. Most importantly, as Americans celebrated the three hundredth anniversary of the English colonial landing and settlement at Jamestown, the Jamestown Exposition Company and official histories at the event described American Indians in an eerily similar fashion as the original colonists. In both instances, American Indians were described as

savage, uncivilized, and different from the purportedly superior white, Anglo-Americans. Likewise, Anglo-American colonists described American Indians as conquered savages during the early years of Virginia and America's colonial history, portraying the white colonists as victorious heroes and the Native Americans as simply obstacles to the expansion, growth, development of colonial America and, later, the United States.

John Smith offered his account of encounters with the American Indians in his 1624 *Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles, together with The true travels, adventures and observations, and A sea grammar*. Smith misunderstood their society, culture, politics, ideology, and overall way of life. For instance, he believed that American Indians did not appropriately or efficiently use the land. He stated, "to nourish so many together they have yet no meanes, because they make so small a benefit of their land, be it never so fertile," implying that European agricultural practices and land ownership were superior to that mixed use associated with American Indians.

¹ Furthermore, Smith is prejudiced and biased account of American Indian character likely influenced other Anglo-American views of American Indians: "Craftie, timorous, quicke of apprehension, and very ingenuous. Some are of disposition fearfull, some bold, most cautelous, all Savage. Generall covetous of Copper, Beads, and such like trash. They are soone moved to anger, and so malicious, that they seldome forget an injury."² Cultural differences between Europeans and American Indians contributed to the prejudice English colonists articulated in their opinions of American Indians. Differences in cultural and religious beliefs, notably the absence of Christianity, were some of the biggest contributors to the English

¹ John Smith, *The general historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles: together with the true travels, adventures and observations, and A sea grammar*, Volume 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1907), <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/gdc/lhbc.0262a> (accessed October 15, 2015), 82.

² Smith, *The general historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles*, 82.

condemnation of Indians, as evidenced by Smith describing their religious rituals as worshipping “fire, water, lightning, thunder,” and suggesting the most important God that American Indians worshiped was “the Devill.”³

In addition to characterizing American Indians as savage, John Smith also used the term heathen to describe America’s indigenous population. In one instance, racist views of American Indians combined with enthusiasm for English imperial goals when Smith stated that King James I “hath place and opportunitie to inlarge his ancient Dominions without wronging any” and that in addition to honoring the King of England by gaining new land in North America, “reducing Heathen people to civilitie and true Religion” would “bringeth honour to the King of Heaven.”⁴ Smith’s views of American Indians were shared by other English settlers and similar to the ways in which American Indians were characterized and remembered in 1907 at the Jamestown Exposition. The 1907 reprinting of Smith’s *Generall Historie* was a publication decision likely influenced by the three hundredth anniversary and the Jamestown Exposition.

While the first Africans did not arrive in English North America until 1619, many Europeans held biases against darker-skinned Africans and a few started to engage in the African slave trade, a system inherently racist to its core. While there were numerous reasons for England’s adoption of large-scale slave labor, the most important factor in the context of this thesis is what the English believed concerning race in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and how their understanding favored the development of slavery in English North America, including Virginia. There was “widespread ethnocentrism and xenophobia towards” non-whites in seventeenth century England that affected their beliefs concerning Africans.⁵

³ Smith, *The general historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles*, 91.

⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵ Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22.

English voyagers began trading with West Africa after 1550 and their participation in the African slave trade matured in the mid to late seventeenth century.⁶

English travelers to West Africa almost always commented on the darker skin complexion of Africans, often describing them as black, an overstated term that demonstrated the influential effect that differences in skin color had on the English perception of Africans.⁷

Englishmen equated the darker skin complexion of Africans to Satan, evilness, and sin.⁸

According to Winthrop Jordan, the *Oxford English Dictionary* description of black in that era included “‘deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul....having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister....Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked....Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc,’” which certainly demonstrated the English concept of blackness and the perception that it was the antithesis of white.⁹ Descriptions of black as wicked, horrible, or sinister undoubtedly contributed to later racist depictions of Africans. For instance, Captain John Smith wrote “Negroes in Africa bee as idle and as devilish people as any in the world.”¹⁰ Moreover, as Virginia Company of London official George Sandys noted, the English misinterpreted Biblical scripture to explain differences in skin complexion among humans and, later, to justify the institution of slavery, believing that Africans “descended of Chus, the sonne of the cursed Ham; as are all of that complexion.”¹¹ Another popular belief explaining the darker skin tone of Africans was that the climate of Africa or a closer proximity to the sun created blackness.

⁶ Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 3-4.

⁷ Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, 4-5.

⁸ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 22.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, quoted in Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, 6.

¹⁰ John Smith, quoted in Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 22.

¹¹ George Sandys, quoted in Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 22.

However, the most dominant view was that Africans were cursed by God.¹² The English looked down upon Africans because they were different from them in terms of: “physiognomy, gestures, languages, dress, and behavior.”¹³ In short, “an amalgam of negative attitudes emerged that constituted racial prejudice toward Africans.” The English confidently condemned Africans and described them as savage due to their differences, including darker skin tone, “clothing, housing, farming, warfare, language, government, morals,” and other customs and habits.¹⁴

English slave trader Thomas Phillip’s 1693 journal entry described what he observed of African slaves in transport across the middle passage, acknowledging the poor conditions in which slaves were kept without remorse for the wrongs of the race based slave trade. Instead, Phillip flatly described shackled slaves, the conditions in which they slept, ate, and how many “leap’d out of the canoos, boat and ship, into the sea, and kept under water till they were drowned, to avoid being taken up” due to desperation.¹⁵ The complete disregard for African culture and the problem of the slave trade was clear when Phillip suggested that “they live much better there [Barbados] than in their own country.”¹⁶ Lastly, Phillip provided proof of the English belief in English superiority over Africans when he compared Africans to animals and described the slaves aboard his ship as “a parcel of creatures nastier than swine.”¹⁷ The English prejudice toward Africans that Phillip demonstrated in the seventeenth century establishes the precedent for the tradition of white racism toward persons of color and minorities that continued in America to the Jamestown Exposition in 1907 and the introduction of the slave trade.

¹² Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 10.

¹³ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 22.

¹⁴ Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 13.

¹⁵ Phillip, “Slaves Endure the Middle Passage, 1693,” 167.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 170.

The tradition of laws created by whites to enslave, disenfranchise, segregate or otherwise discriminate against African Americans is confirmation of the persistence of white racism in colonial English America and the United States. For instance, black codes, segregation, and sharecropping of the “Jim Crow” era were descendants of the seventeenth century laws, such as slave codes, that were designed to regulate and dehumanize African slaves. Race laws existed by the mid-seventeenth century in portions of the Chesapeake and Southern colonies and, by the mid-eighteenth century, all thirteen British North American colonies enacted laws regarding race and slavery.¹⁸ Slavery developed incrementally in the tobacco colonies of English North America and not overnight. According to Winthrop Jordan, slavery developed in three broad stages. First, Africans arrived in 1619 and their population in Virginia and the surrounding region grew slowly to about fifteen thousand by the 1640s, but they were not codified as slaves, despite their arrival by force and condition of servitude.¹⁹ Second, after 1640, there is considerable evidence that Africans in Virginia were treated as slaves, including “lifetime service and inherited status.”²⁰ Third, after 1660, slavery was codified with the creation of various statutes.²¹

British North American colonies drew their inspiration for slave codes or laws from the British Caribbean and they quickly spread throughout the thirteen colonies. The Virginia slave codes of 1661 “stigmatized Africans as racially inferior, as heathens, and as property rather than as persons” and the 1688 slave codes expanded the law regarding treatment of slaves, emphasizing racist vitriol, stating African slaves were prone to terrible sin, inhumanities, and

¹⁸ Phillip, “Slaves Endure the Middle Passage, 1693,” 113.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, 40.

²¹ Ibid., 40.

rape due to their black skin.²² Notably, slave codes increasingly discriminated against Africans and African descendants in the colonies by creating strict distinctions between the whites and blacks ranging from legal rights to punishments. While distinctions in colonial Virginia were increasingly focused on race rather than social status by the mid-seventeenth century, a shift of great consequence occurred in December of 1662 when Virginia statute declared “that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother,” effectively ensuring that the institution of slavery would grow incrementally with each birth to a slave mother.²³

North American assemblies grew quickly after 1660, but began with a 1640 Virginia law that barred slaves from possessing weapons. Further separating blacks and whites in colonial Virginia, miscegenation was banned in 1662.²⁴ Virginia adopted more statutes that gradually stripped African slaves of rights and gave power to the master. For instance, in 1680, the Virginia colony implemented Act X, which forbid slaves from arming themselves with a “club, staffe, gunn, sword or any other weapon of defence or offence” or leaving the property of their master, mistress, or overseer with violators legally punished with twenty lashes or even death, depending on the offence.²⁵ Incrementally, slave laws worsened and further divided the peoples of America, not to mention the relationship with Native Americans. The first slave codes in the Virginia colony took effect in 1680 and were strengthened in 1705, codifying the separate, tarnished status of slaves in Virginia in comparison to whites.²⁶ Morgan quoted the 1705 law,

²² Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 113.

²³ December 1662 Virginia Statute, ACT XII, William Waller Hening, ed. *The Statues at Large [electronic source]; being a collection of all the laws of Virginia from the first session of the legislature, in the year 1619*, (Richmond: Printed for the editor by R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1819-1823, 1819, *Old Dominion University Catalog*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 1, 2016), Vol. II, p. 155.

²⁴ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 112.

²⁵ June 1680 Virginia Statute, Act X, “An act for preventing Negro insurrections.”, William Waller Hening, ed. *The Statues at Large [electronic source]*, Vol. II, p. 481.

²⁶ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 112.

stating that “all servants imported into the Country...who were not Christians in their native Country...shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion...shall be held to be real estate.”²⁷ Furthermore, the 1705 Statute declared that those slaves, now deemed real estate, would “descend unto their heirs and widows of persons departing this life,” further ensuring the continuity of the institution of slavery.²⁸ The codification of slave laws along color lines cemented the discrimination against Africans and their descendants in colonial Virginia and continued well into the history of the state of Virginia and the United States.

Slavery and racial division remained during the American Revolution, when some members of the planter class declined to serve their state and new country due to their fear of slave rebellion or runaways. “Slaveholding elites in the legislature were also happy to bend the rules to appease their slaveholding constituents’ anxieties and ensure stability on the home front.”²⁹ The white fear of blacks, emanating particularly from the planter elite, was certainly a product of bigotry toward blacks that was most certainly rooted in English concepts of race. Michael McDonnell argued in *The Politics of War* that “black dreams of freedom panicked white leaders, never more so than in the midst of war.”³⁰ Blacks living in Virginia and elsewhere were sorely disappointed by the results of the Revolution because a rising number of blacks in Virginia anticipated emancipation following independence from Britain.³¹

Famously, Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation of November 1775 contributed to the chaos and division in Virginia as it instituted martial law in Virginia and declared “all indentured

²⁷ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 112.

²⁸ October 1705 Virginia Statute, “An act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion, to be real estate”, William Waller Hening, ed. *The Statutes at Large [electronic source]*, Vol. III, p. 333.

²⁹ Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, & Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 12.

³⁰ McDonnell, *The Politics of War*, 22.

³¹ Ibid.

Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms...for the more speedy reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His Majesty's Crown and Dignity.”³² In doing so, Woody Holton contends, “the war in Virginia pitted two classes, slaveowners and slaves, against each other” and contributed to a fight for control at home while in the midst of the war against Britain.³³ In the end, the American Revolution resulted in few changes in status for blacks in Virginia. While “many enslaved Virginians did literally fight for their freedom” on the side of the British or by running away, the vast majority remained enslaved and with the same master as before the war.³⁴

Slavery remained the most obvious manifestation of white racism against blacks well into the nineteenth century as the institution increasingly divided the United States and greatly contributed to the Civil War. After the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and post-Civil War enactment of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments during Reconstruction, the latter half of the nineteenth century saw a restoration of white rule in the South, signaling more misery for African Americans, and the beginning of a fight over who controlled historical memory and the memory of the Civil War. For instance, many white Americans, particularly white Southerners, attempted to construct a historical memory of the American Civil War that was not based in reality and ignored the experience of freedmen.

The Dunning School pushed the agenda of white racists by ignoring the outstanding achievements of freedmen during Reconstruction and the positive efforts of the United States government under Republican leadership by distorting history with a interpretation that emphasized “negro incapacity,” slandered African American social and political participation

³² Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, quoted in McDonnell, *The Politics of War*, 134.

³³ Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 161.

³⁴ McDonnell, *The Politics of War*, 486.

after the Civil War, and characterized white Southerners as victims of the Union army's aggression. According to the Dunning School narrative, widely popular for the first half of the twentieth century, Congressional Reconstruction efforts, including the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments was "motivated by an irrational hatred of Southern 'rebels'" and the desire for Republican party dominance.³⁵ Dunning was considered the preeminent authority in Reconstruction history for the first half of the twentieth century and attracted many zealous history students from the South to Columbia University to study under his tutelage.³⁶ According to this white supremacist narrative, the period of Congressional Reconstruction was characterized as radical because the Southern states suffered under the tyranny of revenge seeking Northern "carpetbaggers," Southern "scalawags" and ignorant, inept black freedmen.³⁷

For example, in Dunning's *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, concerning military reconstruction, (the period in which the former Confederacy was divided into five military districts to ensure the enforcement of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments including the right of African American males to vote), he wrote that the Republican led Congress implemented military rule in the South based "on falsehood and malice" as the South had "civil governments that had worked with satisfactory efficiency for a year."³⁸ Likewise, Dunning argued that Congress sought revenge for the Civil War by punishing the Southern whites by instituting "far-reaching despotism" through a military presence designed to enforce the newly created right of African American males to vote, which was passed by the Republicans

³⁵ Foner, *Reconstruction*, xvii-xviii.

³⁶ John David Smith, "Introduction", In *The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction*, ed. By John David Smith and J. Vincent Lowery (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 1.

³⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*, xvii.

³⁸ William Archibald Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, Volume 22 in the American Nation Series, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), 110.

due to their political party's "craving for political power."³⁹ Among other misinterpretations of Reconstruction, Dunning disagreed with the Northern, Republican view of the enactment of black codes and other discriminatory policies in former Confederate states after the Civil War. While Republicans viewed black codes as a deliberate attempt on the part of the South to reverse the legacy of the Civil War and re-establish slavery, Dunning believed white southerners sought to "bring some sort of order out of the social and economic chaos which a full acceptance of the results of war and emancipation involved." He promoted the biased and racist belief that "freedmen were not, and in the nature of the case could not for generations be, on the same social, moral, and intellectual plane with the whites; and this fact was recognized by constituting them a separate class in the civil order" by the creation of black codes.⁴⁰ In summation, Dunning and his southern school of historians completely rewrote Reconstruction history and blamed corrupt Northerners, or Yankees, for punishing white Southerners by providing African Americans with freedom, citizenship, equal protection, and voting rights.⁴¹

The skewed interpretation of Reconstruction put forth by Dunning and his students grew so popular that it greatly influenced the American populace and all forms of entertainment in the early twentieth century, including literature, stage plays, and film. The Dunning School of history "dominated the popular understanding of Reconstruction thanks to its dissemination in David W. Griffith's film *The Birth of the Nation* (1915), Claude G. Bowers's *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (1929), George Fort Milton's *The Age of Hate: Andrew Johnson and the Radicals* (1930), and Margaret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and the film of the same title that appeared three years later."⁴² While these forms of entertainment were

³⁹ Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, 109-111.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁴¹ Smith, "Introduction", In *The Dunning School*, 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*

released after the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, much of Dunning's research and works were published before or during the year of the Ter-Centennial celebration, underlining the climate of animosity in white American populations, particularly in the South, against African Americans. It was not until the mid-twentieth century portion of the African American civil rights movement that revisionist historians finally dismissed, if not outright appropriately repudiated, Dunning and his students as responsible for an inaccurate and racist interpretation of Reconstruction that contributed to a damaged and racially divided America.⁴³

Indeed, it was the racism and continued prejudice toward African Americans promoted by the Dunning School, white Southerners, and racist Americans that characterized the racial climate of the Jamestown Exposition. The Dunning School justified the violence, intimidation, disenfranchisement, and injustices that white Southerners committed against freed African American community. Thus, the 1907 efforts of the N.D.E.C. to challenge the Dunning School and other racist interpretations of American history that vilified African Americans was a necessary and warranted tactic for combating white supremacy and promoting African American rights and equality. The N.D.E.C.'s goal for participation in the Jamestown Exposition was to educate fellow African Americans and re-educate white Americans about the true history of African Americans.

Finally, a brief overview of African American activism combatting inequality and racism is necessary in order to fully understand the efforts of the N.D.E.C. to create an African American exhibition at the Jamestown Exposition. The movement to advance the rights of African Americans and gain full equality picked up where abolitionism left off and experienced challenges, including differences over the best tactic or method to achieve their goal.

⁴³ Smith, "Introduction", In *The Dunning School*, 3.

One such disagreement over tactic involved whether African Americans, particularly those in segregated cities such as Norfolk, Virginia, should even seek to involve themselves with and participate in world's fairs. As Ralph E. Luker noted in *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912*, at the beginning of the twentieth century when disenfranchisement, lynching, urban riots, segregation, and continued subjugation of blacks was deepening the racial crisis of the United States, "conservative Northern white philanthropists and Southern educators formed an alliance with Booker T. Washington to promote public education in the South" while "Black migration to cities built a constituency for black urban reformers with institutional bases in missions, institutional churches, and settlement houses within the black community."⁴⁴ Luker noted that there were critical shifts occurring in the tactics, efforts, and strategies of racial reformers and civil rights activists around the time of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. For instance, the development of critical civil rights pursuing organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League, which organized in 1910 and 1911 respectively, were partly due to the efforts of reformers and activists to recover strategies and ideas from the abolitionist and home missionary movements of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ While dangerously close to an oversimplification, Luker and many historians of the racial reform of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focus on the relationship and division between the ideas and tactics of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Competing camps of racial reform in the African American community debated whether or not to boycott the African American exhibits and the entire Jamestown Exposition. Ultimately, the N.D.E.C., the organization responsible for the presence of African American

⁴⁴ Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 5.

⁴⁵ Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 5.

exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition, took an approach that was closer to Washington's activism in support of achieving civil rights through cooperation with white Americans.

Booker T. Washington promoted "racial uplift," supporting industrial and vocational education for African Americans, and catering to his message of "casting down your bucket where you are," meaning that African Americans must momentarily accept social and political subservience to white Americans while fighting incrementally for economic and educational equality. Ultimately, Washington and his followers believed that promoting education and economic equality later fostered the conditions necessary for gaining complete economic, political, and social equality. Washington, born a slave in 1856 Virginia, was educated in the African Zion Baptist Church and, later, the Hampton Institute, where he received "the industrial education that became his life's work when he adopted it, almost unchanged," from his own schooling experience.⁴⁶

Washington's ideas resonated with many Americans as Social Gospel proponents believed Washington's "gospel of practical Christianity, the work ethic, self-help, and education for service was American social Christianity's message in race relations."⁴⁷ In fact, Washington won the praise of many Southern audiences by telling them "what they wanted to hear" and by quietly accommodating the legal discrimination, or "Jim Crow" segregation that was part of the continued subjugation of African Americans.⁴⁸ Luker noted that, "as a black leader in the rural South, his private opposition to discrimination led to a split between his public and his private self, which became more prominent as the years passed."⁴⁹ The most well-known and cited of Washington speeches was delivered on September 18, 1895 before an audience at the Atlanta

⁴⁶ Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 132.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

Cotton States Exposition in which he famously promoted the pursuit of educational and economic gain for African Americans stating, “cast down your bucket where you are,... cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded... cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, Washington told the white members of the audience to hire black employees, stating that “in all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”⁵¹ Washington prioritized reconciliation to advance the economic status of African Americans by pushing white Americans to embrace African Americans as an acceptable and vital force in industries.

On the other hand, W.E.B. Du Bois was pleased and believed that “if white people offered economic opportunity to blacks and black people cooperated politically with whites,” there could be a true and real settlement between the two races of the South.⁵² Most northerners were supportive of Washington’s ideas and one publication, *The Independent*, proclaimed Washington “fit to be the prophet and leader of his race... He preaches to his own people the gospel they most need.”⁵³ Furthermore, despite Washington’s prioritization of economic advancement over promotion of immediate political and social equality for African Americans, he clearly opposed Jim Crow racism and subjugation, including segregation. With respect to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision of 1896, which famously protected segregation laws on the basis of “separate but equal,” Washington believed it was wrong and, in an effort to

⁵⁰ Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 135.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

persuade whites, stated that “no race can wrong another race simply because it has the power to do so, without being permanently injured in morals, and its ideas of justice.”⁵⁴

Yet, while Washington’s tactic of putting aside the demand for immediate equality in all spheres of life for immediate gains in educational and economic spheres gained popularity quickly, critics viewed Washington’s ideas as too accommodating to white Americans, acceptance of second-class citizenship, and not forceful enough. W.E.B. DuBois increasingly rejected accommodationist strategies and pursued alternative tactics to advance the rights of African Americans. DuBois mocked white men that used Social Darwinists views to justify their cruel prejudice and subjugation of blacks, namely the belief that whites were the higher race and blacks an example of a lower race characterized by criminality, barbarism, and ignorance.⁵⁵ For instance, DuBois wrote that Washington compromised the full political, civic, and social equality of the African American community.⁵⁶ DuBois also wrote that as “so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, [he] does not rightly value the privileges and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambitions of our brighter minds, --so far as he, the South, or the Nation does this-we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them.”⁵⁷

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois praised Washington for pushing for economic gains for African Americans, but criticized his approach for its limits in promoting leadership for the growth of the African American civil rights movement. DuBois recognized that Washington’s leadership and campaign were essential in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as Reconstruction ended, stating that “his programme of industrial education,

⁵⁴ Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 136.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 213.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 214.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 214-215.

conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil and political rights” came at an era “when war memories and ideals were rapidly passing; a day of astonishing commercial development was dawning; a sense of doubt and hesitation overtook the freedmen’s sons.”⁵⁸ Reflecting on the success of Washington in healing the wounds of the South by promoting cooperation between whites and blacks, fighting for and helping create opportunities for greater economic and industrial training of African Americans, building the Tuskegee Institute, and becoming a spokesman for millions of followers, DuBois wrote that he hesitated “to criticise a life which, beginning with so little, has done so much.”⁵⁹ After that preface, however, DuBois launched into a vital critique of “racial uplift” that, in his assessment, silenced African Americans and limited their opportunity to gain political and social equality.

According to DuBois, Washington’s approach equated to submission to the white power structure of the United States. He argued that “Washington’s programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races” by asking black Americans to give up “political power,” “insistence on civil rights,” and “higher education of Negro youth.”⁶⁰ DuBois dug deeper, charging that Washington’s concentration solely on industrial education and reluctance to fight segregation and discrimination outside of economics contributed to the continued disenfranchisement, social status inferiority, and lack of higher education gains for African Americans.⁶¹ Though DuBois acknowledged that the problems faced by African Americans were not Washington’s direct responsibility, he suggested that his position and agenda contributed to a submissive populace. Equally important to the abundant criticism of Washington was DuBois’ agenda, which emphasized, among other things, the need to fight for “the right to vote,” “civic

⁵⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Oxford University Press, [originally published in 1903], 2007), 33.

⁵⁹ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 34-35.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 38-39.

⁶¹ Ibid., 39.

equality,” and “the education of youth according to ability.”⁶² DuBois struck a conciliatory and motivational tone by encouraging African Americans to join Washington in pursuit of industrial training. But he insisted that they must also stand up against discrimination and not apologize or submit. He ended by reiterating the powerful preamble to the Declaration of Independence, reminding readers that “all men are created equal.”⁶³ In considering the applicability of DuBois’ words to the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, it is important to note that some proponents of his ideology wanted to boycott the event due to its location in segregated Norfolk, Virginia and due to the neglect of African Americans by the Jamestown Exposition Company and the isolation of the N.D.E.C.’s Negro Building on the grounds.

Though it is an over simplification to divide the movements to advance the rights of African Americans into two camps, it is important to note the existence of different opinions to contextualize the ensuing debate over the merit of African American participation in white-controlled fairs and expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Demonstrating how some African American activists and racial reformers chose sides, Luker noted that in a Chicago debate of Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*, the sentiment of many black leaders was divided as folks such as “Ferdinand L. Barnett, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Charles F. Bentley defended Du Bois’ critique of Washington, but Monroe Work and S. Laing and Fannie Barrier Williams sided with Washington.”⁶⁴ To put it simply, the N.D.E.C. experienced problems convincing some Americans, both black and white, of the merit of the organization and proposed exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition. The controversy surrounded whether participation at such an event was a worthy tactic for advancement or perpetuation of Jim Crow segregation and accommodation to white America.

⁶² DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 40.

⁶³ Ibid., 43-44.

⁶⁴ Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 216.

Race was on the minds of Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1914, the United States entered a new era of national and international importance, economically, politically, socially, and militarily. The American public viewed these changes with immense pride, nationalism, and uneasiness as they debated the role of their nation on an international scale. Pseudo-sciences, ethnologists, and social Darwinists all attempted to provide the answers that Americans sought. Ethnologists offered theories regarding the differences between races and attempted to “reconcile traces of millennia of human migration with existing prejudices and power relations” as evidenced by the theory that Anglo-Saxonism was a transnational identity cementing white America’s status as superior to persons of color and equal to European counterparts.⁶⁵ Furthermore, there were internal struggles in the United States over how to “interpret the 1790 statute restricting U.S. citizenship to ‘white persons’ in light of new influxes of questionably white immigrant groups such as European Jews, Syrians, and Chinese” among other ‘new immigrants’ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁶ As noted by Gretchen Murphy, white Americans struggled to interpret their identity and to understand racial constructs when faced with the United States’ supposedly growing responsibility to promote civility, progress, and democracy.⁶⁷

Indeed, white supremacy and racism could be used to support and criticize American expansion. Eric Love argued that the United States hesitated to take territories that “were too densely occupied by ‘alien’ races that could not be assimilated into the country under the standards” of white America.⁶⁸ Even geography and climate differences contributed to white

⁶⁵ Gretchen Murphy, *Shadowing the White Man’s Burden: U.S. Imperialism and the Problem of the Color Line*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.

⁶⁶ Murphy, *Shadowing the White Man’s Burden*, 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁸ Eric T. L. Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 23-24.

Americans' racist world views, evidenced by the widely held belief that "the white race could not occupy, settle, develop, or transplant their institutions" to hot and tropical climates "without suffering some moral or physical calamity."⁶⁹ Yet others argued that it was the existence of widespread racism, white supremacy, and social Darwinism in the years after the Civil War that provided the rationale to oppress non-white races in the United States and abroad. C. Vann Woodward suggested that the United States, and in particular the North, used both the concept of the white man's burden and the example of white supremacy in the Jim Crow south and "was looking to Southern racial policy for national guidance in the new problems of imperialism resulting from the Spanish-American War," even citing the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the state of Mississippi's disenfranchisement laws, pronounced by a publication entitled the *Nation* to be "an interesting coincidence that this important decision is rendered at a time when" the United States was "considering the idea of taking in a varied assortment of inferior races in different parts of the world."⁷⁰

Yet, race ideology and racism were used for and against United States imperialism.⁷¹ The pro-imperialist persuasive literature of Reverend Josiah Strong, Senator Albert Beveridge, and Rudyard Kipling's poem entitled "The White Man's Burden" are often cited by historians to suggest a direct causation link between racial prejudice, social Darwinism, and pro-white racial hierarchical philosophies and American policies during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Yet, according to historian Eric Love, this is not proven.⁷² Simply put, Strong was a religious and missionary leader, but not a policy maker, Beveridge was not a United States Senator until 1899, and Kipling's poem did not offer a glowing view of imperialism, but rather,

⁶⁹ Love, *Race over Empire*, 23-24.

⁷⁰ Conner Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 324.

⁷¹ Love, *Race over Empire*, 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 6.

according to Love, a warning about the servility associated with imperialism.⁷³ Yet, there is no doubt that almost all Americans, particularly white Americans, viewed each opportunity at expansion with race on their minds. There was a deep racial prejudice that could be seen through the efforts of the United States government to suppress the resistance movements of American Indians, to subjugate African Americans through segregation and violations of their economic, political, and social rights, through excluding the Chinese from the United States through the Exclusion Act, and attempts to restrict the entry of “new immigrant” groups into the nation.⁷⁴ All of these events were on the minds of visitors to the Jamestown Exposition as they viewed exhibits on peoples considered inferior to white Americans. Americans were fascinated by exhibits featuring the exoticism and “otherness” portrayed in the exhibits on African Americans, commemorative exhibits on American Indians, and displays of Filipinos, a more recent people that the United States conquered.

⁷³ Love, *Race over Empire*, 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

CHAPTER III

THE JAMESTOWN TER-CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION DISPLAYS RACE

The Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition's initial purpose to celebrate Jamestown as the first permanent English settlement in North America was altered during the planning process. The preface of Congress' 1909 *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission* stated that "no exposition commemorating an historical event has been more significant than the Ter-Centennial Celebration" because, in addition to being the first permanent English-speaking North American colony, Jamestown was also notable as the place where "the first English marriage was solemnized; there the first trial by jury was held; there, in 1619, the first legislative body convened; there the first English child was born in America; and within a few hours' ride of the site of the Jamestown Exposition many of the important battles of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War were fought."¹ This Congressional statement reflected on the wide scope of the event, which was broadened from its original focus on the nation's colonial founding to a celebration of the history of the entire nation. President Theodore Roosevelt and Congress supported the State of Virginia and the Jamestown Exposition Company in their endeavors to commemorate the Ter-Centennial Celebration.² Furthermore, while Congress approved appropriations for the Ter-Centennial Jamestown Exposition in March of 1905 and was aware of the event's purpose, Roosevelt altered its focus by inviting many nations of the world to send military representatives and dignitaries as well as naval vessels to Hampton Roads for the Ter-Centennial. Contributing countries included "Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, and Greece of the Eastern Hemisphere; and Brazil,

¹ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 9.

² *Ibid.*

Argentine Republic, Venezuela, Mexico, Porto Rico, Salvador, Peru, Chile, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Costa Rica of the Western Hemisphere.”³ Thus, from very early on in the planning of the Jamestown Exposition, its scope widened to incorporate different ideas and please different financial and influential backers of the project.

President Roosevelt authorized the event in a Proclamation “for the purpose of commemorating, in a fitting and appropriate manner, the birth of the American nation, the first permanent settlement of English-speaking people on the American continent, made at Jamestown, Va., on the 13th of May, 1607, and in order that the great events of American history which have resulted therefrom may be accentuated to the present and future generations of American citizens.”⁴ Yet, Roosevelt also broadened the event by inviting all the nations of the world and encouraging their military presence via naval vessels, truly making the Jamestown Exposition a very broad, tangled affair. President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed the need for “an international naval, marine, and military celebration in the vicinity of Jamestown, on the waters of Hampton Roads, in the State of Virginia, to provide for a suitable and permanent commemoration of” Jamestown as the first permanent English-speaking colony in North America and the birth of the United States.⁵ Roosevelt’s intervention effectively changed the Jamestown Exposition from a commemoration of the founding of Jamestown to a show of the United States’ imperial might.

Meanwhile, the General Assembly and the Jamestown Exposition Company hoped the Jamestown Exposition of 1907 would remind the American public of the importance of the state of Virginia and, in particular the Tidewater region, to the founding of English America and the

³ U *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

United States. Indeed, many of the publications and guides to the Jamestown Exposition printed brief histories of Jamestown, British North America, and the United States, emphasizing that “no patriotic American should neglect to visit the sacred shrines” of Virginia or forget that it was Jamestown and Virginia, not Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and New England that was the birthplace of the nation.⁶ The historic event created high expectations from the public as evidenced in a 1903 issue of the *Richmond-Times Dispatch* that boldly proclaimed that the event would be the “greatest event the South has ever witnessed.”⁷ Unfortunately, the goal to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of Jamestown was overshadowed as the scope of the Exposition grew to encompass the entire history of the United States and much more.

In the end, the 1907 Jamestown Exposition housed exhibits on a dizzying array of topics, but focused on two broad goals: featuring an international naval exhibition on the waters of Hampton Roads and showcasing educative exhibits that provided visitors with a history of early colonial Virginia life, the development of the United States, and the progress of her people.⁸ Yet, like other fairs of the era, many visitors believed the Jamestown Exposition lacked true focus and organization, was marred by delays in construction and completion of exhibits, lacked adequate transportation to the Exposition site, and ultimately, had few visitors. An editorial from *A Journal of the Color Line* called the Jamestown Exposition “the monumental failure in Norfolk” explaining that the army, navy, and Marine Corps were serving at the event “as a side-show to an otherwise unattractive, unedifying and uninstructional conglomeration of arresting architecture and placarded vacancy” and, furthermore, the United States military, particularly the navy, were being used, along with the visiting ships from invited nations, “as an advertising scheme” for the

⁶ *Laird & Lee's Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1907), 9.

⁷ “Jamestown Exposition: Comprehensive Statement of Company’s Plans,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, (Richmond, VA: September 27, 1903), 3, NewsBank/Readex, Database: America’s Historical Newspapers, SQN: 135DAC756D151079.

⁸ “Jamestown Exposition: Comprehensive Statement of Company’s Plans,” 3.

gain of greedy financiers.⁹ The disorganization and ever expanding scope of the Jamestown Exposition led to negative reviews of the event. For instance, an article in Cleveland, Ohio's *Plain Dealer* described the event as a "back woods settlement suddenly shrouded with hideous, temporary board barracks that are called hotels" and, in comparison to the fairs in Chicago or St. Louis, the Jamestown Exposition "lacked a distinctive exposition character," "no distinctive character," as visitors were left with the impression of "too much shrubbery, a lot of mud, rough roads, and some low red brick buildings that fail to dominate the scene...no crowd...in an almost dreary frame."¹⁰ The "unfinished status of the exhibits, buildings, and grounds" months after the Jamestown Exposition opened to visitors diminished the attractiveness of the event to visitors and the "aesthetic quality of the experience."¹¹ Even after the second President of the Jamestown Exposition George Fitzhugh stepped down, Harry St. George Tucker, stated that the Ter-Centennial "was so monumental in scope that it is easy to understand how many opposed the purpose, viewing it as chimerical and impossible to achieve," he suggested that the organizers of the event would eventually be looked at as courageously as "the colonists who first braved the deep and landed at Jamestown in 1607."¹² The reference to the bravery of the English settlers at Jamestown certainly characterized the historical memory of the organizers of the event and many of the visitors as well.

Despite the disorganization and attendance deficit that made the event a financial failure, the Jamestown Exposition's aim to disseminate education for all visitors and historical commemoration of colonial Virginia and the history of the United States went forward.

⁹ "Jamestown Exposition," *Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line*, (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1907), 20, NewsBank/Readex, Database: African American Periodicals, ID: 137993CA5)D236A0.

¹⁰ "Show is Best at Long Range, Jamestown Exposition Does Not Seem to Improve on Acquaintance," *Plain Dealer*, Cleveland, Ohio, July 9, 1907, 3.

¹¹ Frederic W. Gleach, "Pocahontas at the Fair: Crafting Identities at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition," *Ethnohistory* 50, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 423.

¹² Harry St. George Tucker, "Introduction," Charles Keiley, ed., In *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, A.D. 190*, 1.

According to Jamestown Exposition Company President Tucker, “the prime purpose of the Ter-Centennial was to illustrate history, to inculcate patriotism and to show the value of education.”¹³ However, the simple purpose of creating exhibits that provided the history of the founding of Jamestown and the growth of colonial Virginia was undermined by an increasingly wide scope.

The exhibits featuring the history of colonial Virginia, the history of different states of the Union, or the history of the entire United States retold the narrative of English North America and the United States from a white perspective. The story of African Americans, American Indians, and other minorities was almost entirely excluded or segregated from the main exhibits and features of the Exposition. Despite the initial focus of the Exposition’s planners on the Ter-Centennial of the founding of Jamestown, much attention was put on America’s military might, growing naval strength, and the growing status of the United States as a world power at the start of the twentieth century. Indeed, the United States had entered its era of expansion and imperialism, as evidenced by the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the occupation, to varying degrees, of Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. “Anglo-Saxonism, social Darwinism, benevolent assimilation, and the “white man’s burden” — almost unassailable elaborations of white supremacy — justified the annexations that followed the war with Spain in 1898, brought millions of people of color under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, and helped to elevate the nation to the status of a world power.”¹⁴

In a large sense, the Exposition favored exhibits with a focus on white America and it came as no surprise that “the getting together of a special Negro Exhibit of the Jamestown Exposition, separate and distinct from that of the white race, was a stupendous and difficult

¹³ Tucker, “Introduction,” Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 1.

¹⁴ Love, *Race over Empire*, 1.

undertaking.”¹⁵ It is telling that the Jamestown Exposition Company, in charge of the overall Ter-Centennial celebration, did not include African American exhibits in their plans for the event. In fact, the history of the English involvement in the African slave trade, African slavery in the colonies, or the development of African Americans was completely neglected in the main exhibits and in the exhibit created by the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum.¹⁶ Despite 6,000 square feet of exhibit space and an emphasis on exhibits “articles or material of an historical nature as would serve to impart a knowledge of our colonial and national history,” there was no mention of African American history.¹⁷ The Jamestown Exposition Company, the official guides and exhibits did not plan for an entire exhibit featuring African Americans nor did they feature African Americans within their existing exhibits. Thus, without the efforts of the N.D.E.C. African Americans would have been absent a narrative which fit the era that celebrated white, Anglo-Saxon heritage above all else. In fact, even though there were no features on African Americans that boldly or explicitly claimed African American inferiority, the exclusion or omission was a prejudicial act that reinforced the social divisions of the United States.

An American society, controlled by whites, used political control, laws, and social customs to exclude nonwhites, particularly African Americans, from the mainstream through segregation. Fairs and expositions mimicked larger society by excluding African Americans from displays or relegating them to separate corners of the exposition grounds. African American activists and objectors reacted by protesting segregated and white supremacist exhibits at fairs and expositions of the period. Many African American activists logically concluded that to support world's fairs and expositions, whether through purchasing a ticket and attending or

¹⁵ Giles B. Jackson and D. Webster Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States* (Richmond, VA: The Virginia Press, 1908), 138.

¹⁶ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 114.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

creating and funding African American segregated exhibits, was wrong due to the fact that the popular expositions and fairs validated Jim Crow racial segregation and white supremacy.

A play entitled “The Clansman,” a theatrical version of the 1905 novel by Thomas F. Dixon, Jr. which romanticized the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan, was chosen by the Academy of Music to be shown during the Jamestown Exposition period “because of its appropriateness and popularity” and opened on April 29, 1907, just a few days after the Jamestown Exposition opening.¹⁸ *The Winston-Salem Journal* extolled the promise of the celebration and high expectations of the plays opening in Norfolk, Virginia as, for instance, “splendid government cavalry horses will be used as the mounts of the night-riders, the latter being severely who actually took part in the thrilling events of the reconstruction era.”¹⁹ Clearly the choice of a play such as “The Clansman” that celebrated the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan and venerated a time when slaves were subordinated by slavery and violence illustrates the racism that confronted the N.D.E.C. and made its efforts all the more important and its control of every aspect of its exhibits a true accomplishment. As indicated by an article entitled “The Freeman Would Like to See” in *The Freeman*, most African Americans wanted to see the play “‘The Clansman’ eliminated from the theatrical boards all over the land.”²⁰ The play had plenty of support, despite opposition from some, including African Americans. One newspaper article stated that “the phenomenal success of *The Klansman* can only be attributed to the fact that it is a great play” and explained how the hero of the play was a “gallant leader of the Ku-Klux-Klan” that fought against interracial marriage and the “sale of his ancestral homestead to satisfy taxes levied by negroes and carpet-baggers,” confirming the very racist portrayal of the Reconstruction period

¹⁸ “‘The Clansman’ Honored,” *The Winston-Salem Journal*, April 26, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 139499798C8749D2.

¹⁹ “‘The Clansman’ Honored,” *The Winston-Salem Journal*, April 26, 1907.

²⁰ “The Freeman Would Like to See,” *The Freeman*, January 11, 1908.

and African Americans.²¹ Yet the success of the book and play *The Klansman* and the popularity of the 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* that featured white actors in black face and racist characterizations of African Americans increased membership in the Ku Klux Klan nationwide, demonstrating the viability of white racism in the United States against nonwhites, and especially against African Americans.

President Theodore Roosevelt's speech at the Jamestown Exposition proved the event's true focus was on praising the white race and the historical origins of white Americans. Roosevelt made it clear that he viewed America's English heritage as a source of its greatness when he proclaimed that he had only "a very small portion of English blood in" his veins, but that did not alter the "fact that this nation was founded by Englishmen, by the Cavalier and the Puritan" and that "their tongue, law, literature, the fund of their common thought, made an inheritance which all of us share." He summed it up by saying that "it was the men of English stock who did most in casting the mold into which our national character was run."²² In fact, Roosevelt began his speech by giving a special greeting to "the people of Great Britain and Ireland" because "their tongue, law, literature," and other characteristics "marked deep the lines along which we have developed" as "it was the men of English stock who did most in casting the mold into which our national character was run."²³

Roosevelt went further in praising the virtue of white America's European stock and ignored all the contributions of America's inhabitants of other origins, including Africa, Latin America, and Asia. President Roosevelt believed that it was the English pioneering Cavaliers and Puritans that were the "strong twin individualities" of the nation's colonial character, yet, the

²¹ "Academy of Music," *The Kalamazoo Gazette*, March 17, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 1244C5742901A670.

²² Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 160-161.

²³ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 29.

American people were “a mixture of blood” that “represented a new and distinct ethnic type.”²⁴ The “mixture of blood” that President Roosevelt referred to did not include minorities and persons of color. Instead, Roosevelt explained the origin of the American people as English and “from almost every nation of Europe we have drawn some part of our blood, some part of our traits.”²⁵ The President continued by greeting “every nation of Europe we have drawn some part of our blood, some part of our traits,” as he and many white Americans believed that American racial greatness was “fundamentally akin to, all of the nations of Europe.”²⁶ There were no greetings to the nations of West Africa and the roots of African Americans. President Roosevelt made no remarks in praise of the great diversity of the nation. Instead, insulted or ignored the nation’s diversity outside, demonstrating the potency of bigotry and racism in the United States and the climate in which the Jamestown Exposition occurred. For instance, in celebrating the role of English settlers at Jamestown and, later, Plymouth for creating the nation in North America, he derogatorily referred to America’s existence before English control as “the great wooded wilderness, the Indian-haunted waste.”²⁷

Roosevelt referenced the many nations he had invited for the naval focus of the exposition and promoted the greatness of the United States and its paternalistic role as an imperial nation when he stated, “to all of you here gathered I express my thanks for your coming, and I extend to you my earnest wishes for the welfare of your several nations,” adding that “the world has moved so far that it is no longer necessary to believe that one nation can rise only by thrusting another down” and “all true patriots, now earnestly wish that the leading nations of mankind, as in their several ways they struggle constantly toward a higher civilization, a higher

²⁴ Roosevelt, quoted in Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 162.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 29.

²⁷ Roosevelt, quoted in Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 162.

humanity, may advance hand in hand,” suggesting that the United States had a role in helping to cultivate and lead other nations.²⁸ The citizens of the United States were equally fascinated with the many nations of the world and simultaneously proud of their nation’s accomplishments and imperial glory.

Unlike its celebration of America’s European origins, the Jamestown Exposition marginalized racial others. The Warpath serves as great proof of the abundant fascination with marginalization of race at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. The Warpath was advertised as the equivalent of the Chicago World’s Fair’s “Midway,” offering exhibits and concessions with varying races on display and foreign experiences to entertain visitors.²⁹ Historian Christopher Robert Reed noted that “The Midway Plaisance” at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair was “seven-eighths of a mile long and 600 feet wide” and featured “cultural and racial diversity” with exhibits on peoples from around the world, offering “the observer an opportunity to see the human existence through a prism.”³⁰ The Jamestown Exposition offered some of the best opportunities for visitors of the Jamestown Exposition to examine other cultures and races, including Filipinos, Eskimos, and various other cultures or peoples from around the world.

The Warpath included other exhibits that emphasized the foreignness and uncivilized nature of others and reinforced the white supremacy that ruled the United States in 1907. Indeed, Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage explained that “‘authentic’ villages of exotic peoples and cultures” were common features of expositions and “were more than just an expression of imperialist hubris and curiosity; they were the very means through which fair planners

²⁸ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 29.

²⁹ *Laird & Lee’s Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial*, 127.

³⁰ Christopher Robert Reed, “*All the World is Here!*”: *The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), xxvi, xxx.

accentuated cultural differences and produced ‘imperial truth.’”³¹ The Jamestown Exposition was firmly entrenched in the promotion of imperialism, including the celebration of the English conquest of North America beginning at Jamestown in 1607, U.S. expansion both in internally through westward expansion and externally through the 1898 Spanish-American War, and America’s increased maritime and industrial strength. In many ways, the Jamestown Exposition rationalized scientific racism by helping accentuate differences among peoples in an effort to reinforce the belief that white Americans were superior and ranked highly among the races of the world and others, particularly persons of color, were not only different, but primitive.

For instance, “Fair Japan” offered a white interpretation of a Tokyo street scene that included a tea garden, a pagoda, Japanese architecture and wares, and promised to “show the Japs in their histrionic and gastronomic life.”³² The short description of “Fair Japan” in *Laird and Lee’s Guide* debased the Japanese by referring to the Japanese as “Japs” and minimizing their culture by focusing on the ways in which they were different from white Americans.

Another concession within the Warpath area, referred to as the “Beautiful Orient” that offered visitors the opportunity to “see the quaint river craft of the Nile and hear the weird music of the Lotus land” which, again, emphasized differences from white American culture with the condescending descriptors, such as “quaint” and “weird.”³³

The Philippines, recently acquired after the 1898 Spanish American War, was another feature of the Jamestown Exposition, including a celebration of American military success acquiring the islands and a display in the Warpath of the Filipino people designed to entertain American visitors to the Jamestown Exposition. Proving the relevance of America’s recent

³¹ Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’ and (Re)Presenting African American Historical Memory,” 1370.

³² *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 128.

³³ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 128.

successes in the age of New Imperialism, even the Daughters of the American Revolution had a display case that featured items “illustrating the arts and culture of the outlying possessions of the United States” including “the Philippines, Porto Rico, Hawaii and Alaska” at the event.³⁴ The exhibition of Filipinos at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition was intended to be more fair and less of “a circus affair” than the “exhibition of dog-eating Igorrotes and tree—dwelling Negritos at the St. Louis exposition” in 1904, according to a 1907 newspaper article from the *Springfield Republican*.³⁵ The Igorrotes were named for the region of the Philippines from which they originated. While the article focused on describing what the Jamestown Exposition would do differently from the St. Louis exhibit, nevertheless, the description of Filipinos as savage was an indicator of the bias against them by white Americans. The article also indicated that it was W.A. Sutherland that was in charge of the Filipinos brought in for the Jamestown Exposition, as he “spent several months gathering articles and people from different sections of the islands” and his purpose was to help “undo as far as he could the erroneous impression created by the St. Louis exhibit.”³⁶ Though the journalist, David Doherty, believed that Sutherland would do a credible job of presenting the Filipino people, he acknowledged that there were Filipino savages and stating that Sutherland purposely “made no attempt to collect savages” for the Jamestown Exposition.³⁷ Yet, the term “savage” was used by many to describe the Filipinos exhibited in The Warpath.

A newspaper article from the *Macon Telegraph* announcing the arrival of “one hundred Filipinos en route to the Jamestown exposition” that had arrived in San Francisco in April of

³⁴ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 418.

³⁵ David J. Doherty, “The Filipinos at Jamestown Not to be a Circus Affair” *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, Massachusetts), May 13, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 11E1FEAC9F280F18

³⁶ Doherty, “The Filipinos at Jamestown Not to be a Circus Affair,” *Springfield Republican*.

³⁷ Ibid.

1907 distinguished between “three civilized and three savage tribes” among the arrivals.³⁸

Another newspaper article from the *Omaha World Herald* unfairly distinguished the Filipinos that were exhibited at Jamestown as well, stating that “the civilized tribes represented are the Tagala, Visayan and the Bisolos” whereas “the savage members are from the Bagalo, Ilano and Moro tribes.”³⁹ A 1907 newspaper article from the *Riverside Independent Enterprise* reported on student protests over Filipino shows at American fairs.⁴⁰ The article stated that “Filipino students of the university have united in an attempt to suppress the exhibitions of Igorrotes in various expositions of this country” because they are “an injustice to the Filipinos and that the coining of money through such expositions is unworthy of those who pretend to be interested in the welfare of the islanders.”⁴¹ The protests occurred prior to the “latest exhibit” of “Igorrotes, Moros and Filipinos” “at the Jamestown Exposition” and called the efforts of W.A. Sutherland a “scheme” because his actions represent “contemptible traffic in naked human flesh” that leaves Americans “with a feeling of abhorrence instead of with an favorable impression of the Philippines.”⁴² This scathing review of Sutherland’s motivation in bringing Filipinos to the Jamestown Exposition continued by questioning why he did not simply display the efforts of educated Filipino students in the United States rather than trafficking other Filipinos. They accused Sutherland of being an individual who wanted “to make money at the Jamestown exposition by insulting and detracting from the very people who have given him a generous salary for superintendent of the Filipino

³⁸ “Filipinos En Route to Jamestown Exposition,” *Macon Daily Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), April 22, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 1162864906494890

³⁹ “Filipinos for Expo: One Hundred Arrive, Including Slaves and their Owner,” *Omaha World Herald* (Omaha, Nebraska), April 22, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 113AFB0B333B66F8

⁴⁰ “Fighting Against Igorrate Shows,” *Riverside Independent Enterprise* (Riverside, California), January 1, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 13750CBB4473BA9E.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Fighting Against Igorrate Shows,” *Riverside Independent Enterprise*.

students in America.”⁴³ Finally, the Filipino students that protested the Filipino exhibition at the Jamestown Exposition believed that Sutherland purposely chose Filipinos to entertain audiences as they accused him of targeting Virginians “where the negro question is prominent,” and suggested that audiences might “not pay to see educated Filipinos” and would rather see “naked Igorrottes” and get the false “impression that these are the real Filipinos, while those who wear clothes and are educated are the exception.”⁴⁴

Journalist Hamilton Wright also expressed concerns about the false pretenses under which the Jamestown Exposition Company and W.A. Sutherland would exhibit Filipinos, particularly the Igorrottes.⁴⁵ Wright reported on the Igorotes that had arrived in San Francisco and departed for the Jamestown Exposition and explained that they were being exploited once more, just as they had at the St. Louis world’s fair in 1904 and the Portland exposition in his article entitled “The Marvelous Rice Terraces of the Igorotes.”⁴⁶ Wright patiently explained that the Igorotes were mischaracterized by fair organizers and “an energetic press” eager to incorrectly describe them as “savage,” “head hunters,” and “dog eaters,” while ignoring the truth about the Filipino people.⁴⁷ Wright’s assessment matches that of the Filipino students protesting the importation, display, and racist exploitation of Filipinos at world’s fairs, including the Jamestown Exposition. Wright highlighted the “worthy traits” of the Igorotes, especially building and maintaining rice terraces, and appealed to America’s better senses by condemning their description at world’s fairs as “dog eaters” and “head hunters.”⁴⁸ Despite Wright’s praise of the Igorotes and condemnation of fair organizers habit of bringing in audiences by

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hamilton Wright, “The Marvelous Rice Terraces of the Igorotes,” *San Francisco Call* Vol. 102, No. 128, October 6, 1907. California Digital Newspaper Collection. <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19071006&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>

⁴⁶ Wright, “The Marvelous Rice Terraces of the Igorotes,” *San Francisco Call*.

⁴⁷ Wright, “The Marvelous Rice Terraces of the Igorotes,” *San Francisco Call*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

mischaracterizing them as “dog eaters” and “head hunters,” he was unwilling to declare them equal to white Americans. Instead, Wright reaffirmed hierarchies of race by simultaneously belittling the Igorrotes, slyly insulting American Indians, and praising America’s imperial success by stating that “though they may in a sense be called savages, yet they cannot, for instance, be compared with our American Indian” as they “respond readily to the better side of civilized life as we know it and they are adapted by their inherent character to play a part in the development of Uncle Sam’s great insular possessions in the orient.”⁴⁹

The Philippine exhibit was described as a “reservation” that would “show life as it is among the civilized and Christianized Filipinos and also the rude life in huts of the less civilized natives at work fashioning implements of war or domestic life” in *Laird and Lee’s Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial*.⁵⁰ The assertion that Filipinos lived ill-mannered lives and were “less civilized” was insulting and a reflection of deeply held prejudices toward non-whites outside of the United States. Furthermore, the guide also suggested that the Jamestown Exposition’s exhibit on Filipinos provided a better educational opportunity “for studying the Filipinos than did the exhibit at St. Louis.”⁵¹ The *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition* briefly and insultingly described the Philippine Reservation as “seventy-seven Filipinos of five tribes – Tagalogs, Moros, Bagobos, Visayans and Hocanos – that do not understand one another’s language.”⁵² As literacy, language, and communication skills were all considered part of distinguishing characteristics for civility and modernity, the implication was that the Filipinos lacked key indicators of being a civilized race.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 129.

⁵¹ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 129.

⁵² *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition, Historic Virginia, and Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Byron. S Adams, 1907), 18.

Even a newspaper report on the birth of a Filipino at the Jamestown Exposition demonstrated the peculiar fascination that white American readers and fair visitors had with skin color. In a 1907 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, the birth of a Filipino was strangely and derogatorily described, stating that “all the way from the Philippine Islands flew a big stork last Monday, bearing in its long beak a tiny brown bundle of femininity which it dropped in the tent of Prince Oon, chief of the Bagobo tribe of the Filipinos in the Jamestown Exposition grounds.”⁵³ Though a report on a birth of a Filipino at the Jamestown Exposition does not seem that strange, the description of the child as a “tiny brown bundle” reiterated the American preoccupation with skin color and the effort of fairs to exoticize Filipinos and other racial groups featured within the Warpath portion of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition grounds.

Literature from the Jamestown Exposition also demonstrated how fascinated white American visitors were by the differences of culture and habit that were on display at “The Warpath.” *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition* described the Filipino exhibit as a “Philippine Village” that housed “several independent groups of huts, each serving as a village for a tribe” intended to mimic housing in the Philippines, including details such as utensils and various household items.⁵⁴ The Philippine Village was popular with visitors of The War Path portion of the Exposition, as ordinary white Americans were excited to view “the little brown men and women” weaving baskets, making pottery, and engaging in various activities that were encouraged by the Exposition organizers in order to show visitors the native activities of the various Filipino tribes.⁵⁵

⁵³ “Filipino Princess Arrives in America: Little Bagobo Baby Girl Left by Mr. Stork in Jamestown Exposition Grounds,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), August 1, 1907. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 1149A30E19947258

⁵⁴ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 687-688.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 688.

Yet, even *the Official Blue Book* account of the Filipino exhibit demonstrated the prejudice of white Americans and the fact that Filipinos were featured to entertain white American visitors with disparaging words and phrases. Describing Filipinos as “savage Moros” or “brown men and women” and describing their pottery as “crude” and their fighting instruments as “strange weapons” all supported the racist views of white Americans and the belief that they were superior while others were different and inferior.⁵⁶ The few instances in which *The Official Blue Book* positively described the exhibited Filipinos was rare and did little to negate the disparaging characterization and exploitative exhibit of Filipinos in The Warpath. On one occasion, the Filipinos within the village exhibit were described as “entirely civilized” and at another point, *the Official Blue Book* acknowledged a Filipino orchestra that played at the exposition between October 14 and 31 of 1907, but again, there were few instances of a positive portrayal of Filipinos.⁵⁷ Even their attire, or lack thereof, was “causing comment” amongst the visitors to the Exposition, further proving the existence of racism, the belief in white superiority, and the peculiar fascination of Americans with the culture of others that were viewed as different.⁵⁸ Overall, the existence of the Filipino exhibit was a clear example of the racist exploitation of nonwhites to sell tickets and fit into the celebration of America’s imperial success, including the possession of the Philippines. Sutherland and the Jamestown Exposition Company clearly mimicked the display of Filipinos for entertainment at previous fairs because they knew Americans were fascinated by different lifestyles.

The Warpath also offered racist stereotypes of African Americans in an Old Virginia Mill and American Indians that interacted with cowboys on an exhibit entitled the Western Ranch. The “Old Mill” concession offered visitors the opportunity to view a working corn mill, purchase

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 688, 769.

⁵⁸ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 688.

a meal of hot cakes, corn bread, and country sausage with syrup and to be served by “Mammies,” which were racist portrayals of African American women that harkened to the days of slavery.⁵⁹ The “101 Ranch” was the Jamestown Exposition’s equivalent of the immensely popular Wild West shows that toured the nation during the period. Featuring Oklahoma’s Miller Brothers, the “101 Ranch of Bliss, Oklahoma” depicted the American West in a romanticized, inaccurate manner and featured interaction between cowboys, Mexicans, American Indians and “half-breeds.”⁶⁰ In fact, the “101 Ranch” was advertised as showing life on the American plains “as it was when the Indians were rough.”⁶¹ Despite not qualifying what “rough” meant in describing American Indians, it was certainly a derogatory term that implied a lack of civility in an era in which Plains Indians were increasingly harassed, killed, and pushed off their tribal lands by encroaching white settlers on the Plains and into the west. Moreover, despite including various images of Pocahontas on exposition souvenirs and mentioning the Powhatan in the printed history in the context of their interaction with the English settlers at Jamestown, the performing Indians “were from Oklahoma and the Plains” and “not connected to the Powhatans or Virginia,” which only validated visitors’ preconceptions of American Indians on horseback and other western stereotypes.⁶²

Unfortunately, the Jamestown Ter-centennial Exposition was not intended to celebrate the wonder of American Indian culture, traditions, and uniqueness in 1607 when the English arrived. Rather, the commemoration of the American Indians that first encountered the English at Jamestown illustrated an obstacle that the earliest English settlers overcame in creating a permanent colony that was eventually part of the narrative of the origin and growth story of the

⁵⁹ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Gleach, “Pocahontas at the Fair: Crafting Identities at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition,” 425.

United States. Instead of recounting the true history of Jamestown's founding and celebrating the lives and roles of American Indians in the early history of British North America and the United States, the official histories emphasized white English colonists overcoming their initial struggle to survive to found a permanent English settlement in North America, supported by their increased economic viability due to the cultivation and sale of tobacco, the establishment of a Christian church for worship, and the first legislative assembly in Virginia, the House of Burgesses, which first convened in 1619.⁶³ Thus, the viewpoint projected by the exhibits, souvenirs, and histories of Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition offered a view of American Indians that was remarkably and eerily similar to the views of seventeenth century English colonists that first encountered American Indians. While most commemorations of the Powhatan Indians focused on Pocahontas, her saving of John Smith, and her marriage and Anglicization, there was one large diorama in the Smithsonian exhibit that portrayed trade between John Smith and the Indians.⁶⁴ Thus, authenticity was not a strong suit of the Jamestown Exposition and other fairs of the era as the focus was on the glory and conquest of English America and the "taming" and "conquering" of American Indians.

Official guides offered by the Jamestown Exposition Company or histories perpetuated, rather than challenged, the views of John Smith and other English colonists. For instance, terms such as "savage" were still used to describe American Indians and official histories did not miss the opportunity to emphasize American Indian attacks on white colonies and colonists. In recounting the story of Jamestown's founding and early struggles, *Laird & Lee's Guide* reminded visitors that the ancestors of Americans, English colonists, were "ravaged by fever and

⁶³ *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition*, 31-33.

⁶⁴ Gleach, "Pocahontas at the Fair: Crafting Identities at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition," 430-431.

sickness, attacked by savages and torn by internal dissention.”⁶⁵ The simple use of the term ‘savage’ was divisive and suggested that most white Americans and visitors to the Exposition subscribed to a view of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the notion that it was the English, Anglo-Saxon, white heritage that helped make the United States one of the greatest nations in the world. Furthermore, the term ‘savage’ promoted a society highly divided by racial classifications and hierarchies. Most importantly, for white visitors to the Exposition, it supported their white-centric worldview, in which their ancestors, the English colonists, helped improve the land they now inhabited by ridding the area of ‘savage’ Native Americans.

The term “savage” repeatedly appeared in the histories offered at the Jamestown Exposition. For example, as John Smith’s story of being saved by Pocahontas was being recounted, it noted that “as the savages circled around” John Smith, Pocahontas came to the rescue of the English prisoner of the Native Americans.⁶⁶ Another guide to the Exposition that included a history for commemorating also used insulting language to describe Native Americans, stating that after arriving in the New World, English settlers “were soon attacked by savages and driven back to their ships.”⁶⁷ In President Tucker’s opening address at the Jamestown Exposition he praised the fortune of Americans and the American Republic for overcoming many obstacles, including overcoming and defeating American Indians, or as he called it, “the dangers of the savage.”⁶⁸ In President Theodore Roosevelt’s speech at the Jamestown Exposition that helped commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of Jamestown remembered American Indians derogatorily as well, stating that “in the early stages the frontiersman had to do battle with the savage, and when the savage was vanquished there

⁶⁵ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition*, 31.

⁶⁸ President Harry Tucker’s opening address, Charles Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 154.

remained the harder strain of soil and climate.”⁶⁹ On another occasion, derogatory and inflammatory language describing the actions of Native Americans was used to describe one of their few victories over the Jamestown settlement in 1622, as “the colony were butchered by the Indians.”⁷⁰ On another occasion, the actions of Native Americans were described as on “The War Path,” reminding visitors of the namesake for one of the concession areas of the Jamestown Exposition and also implying that it was the Native Americans, not the English colonists, which pursued conflict and war.⁷¹ Offering an example of completely distorting the historical facts, one historical account produced for the Exposition while describing the fragile early years of the English settlement in Virginia stated that the English colonists “made treaties with the Indians which were broken by the savages and food was scarce since few of the Englishmen were farmers.”⁷²

Furthermore, some of the literature of the early twentieth century put forth similarly biased views of American Indians. Roger A. Pryor’s 1907 *The Birth of the Nation* commemorated the founding Jamestown by recounting its story and offered various prejudiced descriptions of American Indians, including the statement that American Indians were “savages” that possessed “murderous instincts.”⁷³ A *New York Times* review of *The Birth of the Nation* offered this description of Pryor’s take on the American Indians encountered by the English at Jamestown that perfectly captures the racist historical memory of American Indians at the start of the twentieth century: “Another point which the author admirably emphasizes is the power of the fanatical and terrible Indian religion of the time; a belief which demanded the sacrifice even of

⁶⁹ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 163.

⁷⁰ *Laird & Lee’s Guide*, 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition*, 31.

⁷³ “The Era of Capt. John Smith.” *New York Times*. May 4, 1907. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96696989?accountid=12967>.

human children, and supported a race of tyrannical and mysterious priests, oracles of all superstitions.”⁷⁴ Lastly, Pryor’s book also perpetuated the stereotype of the colonist as civilized and kind while the American Indian was unwelcoming and antagonistic, stating that “The white man came to a hostile shore. He came with words of friendship in his mouth.”⁷⁵

Exhibits at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition often had white Americans portraying American Indians in stereotypical costumes. For instance, in the state of Oregon’s exhibit, forty white women attended the Exposition “dressed in Indian costume, and will advertise the state of Oregon. Their trip will include a three weeks’ stay at the Exposition. The party will be at the Exposition either in July or August.”⁷⁶ Though the scene of white Oregon women mimicking American Indian dress was done to advertise the state of Oregon’s exhibit, it undoubtedly did not promote an equal view of American Indians and white Americans.

Much as Filipinos were displayed, other peoples of the growing American empire were part of the Warpath, including people of Alaska, which had come under the control of the United States in the 1860s. “The Esquimaux Village was a fairly good simulation of the life that is enjoyed by Uncle Sam’s wards in Alaska,” but the “Hampton Roads temperature made the Artic clothing almost unendurable” was the summary of the display on Eskimos at the Jamestown Exposition from *The Official Blue Book*.⁷⁷ Held a little more than fifty years after the United States purchased Alaska and completed many of the acquisitions associated with Manifest Destiny and immediately after the imperial acquisition of possessions and coaling stations across the Pacific and in the Caribbean, The Jamestown Exposition of 1907’s Warpath offered a unique

⁷⁴ “The Era of Capt. John Smith.” New York Times. May 4, 1907.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Laird & Lee’s *Guide*, 125.

⁷⁷ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 686.

opportunity for visitors to reflect upon the nation's growth while viewing exhibits that belittled or infantilized groups such as Eskimos and Filipinos.

While the Jamestown Exposition exalted white racial achievements and military supremacy, it infantilized or exoticized racial others, including Filipinos and American Indians. Like other world's fairs, the Jamestown Exposition's Warpath featured exhibits and concessions that were designed to inform and entertain audiences. Unfortunately, many exhibits within the grounds of the Jamestown Exposition celebrated the imperial greatness of white America at the expense of racial others. Thus, visitors to the event were left with a false impression of having seen many peoples from around the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEGRO DEVELOPMENT AND EXPOSITION COMPANY

While white America was showcased for commemoration and celebration, and most other races were displayed on “The Warpath” for entertainment and gawking, the Negro Development and Exposition Company’s building proudly exhibited African American accomplishments in a counter-point to the dominant, white imperialist theme of the Jamestown Exposition. Giles Jackson and the N.D.E.C. participated in the Jamestown Exposition with bold exhibits housed in a Negro Building on the fair’s grounds to ensure that the story and history of African Americans was part of the Jamestown settlement. The N.D.E.C. of the United States of America was created by a group of African Americans in order to educate the public, both black and white, friend and foe, about the history of African Americans and publicize the advancements and accomplishments that they have made as a race, especially after the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation to dismantle the traditional inferior view of African Americans and replace it with the true history and story of African Americans and dispel discrimination and the misinformation about their race.¹ The N.D.E.C. hoped to spur great change, create greater African American agency, and, ultimately, promote the view of African Americans as equal to all other races, including whites, who stood at the pinnacle of power during the period of the Exposition. Thus, the N.D.E.C.’s Negro Building and its numerous exhibits were unique not only because they intended to break down prejudices and misconceptions about the Negro race held by whites, but also because it was fully operated by African Americans, whereas the exhibits on Filipinos and American Indians were largely controlled by the Jamestown Exposition Company

¹ Giles B. Jackson and D. Webster Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States* (Richmond, VA: The Virginia Press, 1908), 138-139.

and white Americans. Most importantly, the efforts of the N.D.E.C. and the existence of a separate, segregated, “Negro Building” would not have been necessary had the Jamestown Exposition Company’s exhibits and the exhibits of the Smithsonian included the history and accomplishments of African Americans. Yet even the Congressional Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission acknowledged that “it was not in the original scheme of the Exposition to have a Negro Department.”²

The N.D.E.C. published their purpose when they were formally chartered on August 13, 1903 by the Corporate Commission of Virginia “with an authorized capital stock of \$800,000 divided into shares of \$10 each, for the purpose of uniting with the white people in celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the landing of the English speaking people at Jamestown, Va., on the 13th day of May, 1607, and in furtherance of this object to place upon exhibition the achievement of the Negro Race in America, as the result of his having been brought to this country, and specially to show what the race has accumulated for the betterment of its condition since 1865.”³ Indeed, the efforts of the N.D.E.C. were multifaceted and though its efforts to support the Exposition’s goal of commemorating the Jamestown Tri-Centennial were genuine, a greater goal was educating the visitors and correcting their prejudice against African Americans. Giles Jackson and Webster Davis clearly stated this goal in appeals to their “white fellow-citizens, especially to those whom we believe to be friendly to us and our cause.”⁴ Jackson, Davis, and the N.D.E.C. asked for the support of white people as they sought to exhibit what African Americans had “made, produced, woven, carved, engraved, invented, written and published; in fact, every thing it has done--that the world may form a correct opinion of the

² *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 141.

³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Negro race of this country--to the end that a proper solution of the 'problem' may be had from a business, commercial, financial and industrial standpoint.”⁵ Furthermore, though Jackson and Davis carefully worded their pursuit of civil rights and intent to advance the cause of African Americans, they also did not shy away from their attempt to silence “the unjust and unfair critics of the Negroes” through a re-education via their efforts in creating African American focused exhibits within the Negro Building.⁶

In a 1907 article entitled “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown” in *Colored American Magazine*, journalist R. W. Thompson assessed the purpose of the N.D.E.C.’s exhibits, stating that “the promoters of the Negro exhibit aim to emphasize the educational value of the exposition as a whole to the colored people of America, and the healthful effect the massive aggregation of material in the Negro building will have upon those who, because of ignorance or prejudice, are refusing to acknowledge the Negro as a constructive factor in the civilization of the age.”⁷ Additionally, Thompson targeted African Americans that would benefit from seeing the numerous examples of accomplishments of their fellow people across the United States, science and anthropological experts that “take nothing for granted” and “demand concrete and tangible proof of all that any people may claim for themselves,” and white Americans that remained ignorant of the advancement of African Americans.⁸

The N.D.E.C. and its supporters were activists and their project of erecting a building to house African American focused exhibits created by African Americans was a form of activism and ultimately promoted greater black agency in the United States. African Americans sought to promote the view of African Americans as equal to that of all races. The N.D.E.C. stated its

⁵ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 139.

⁶ Ibid., 139.

⁷ R. W. Thompson, “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown,” *Colored American Magazine*, Vol. XIII, Issue 1 (Boston, MA), July 1, 1907, 26.

⁸ Thompson, “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown,” 26.

purpose clearly, but carefully, to the public when seeking public support and building awareness of their project, stating that their purpose was “uniting with the white people in celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the landing of the English speaking people at Jamestown, Va., on the 13th day of May, 1607, and in furtherance of this object to place upon exhibition the achievement of the Negro Race in America, as the result of his having been brought to this country, and specially to show what the race has accumulated for the betterment of its condition since 1865.”⁹

The N.D.E.C. invested great energy in accumulating the necessary tangible items created by African Americans to display the proof of their equality to white Americans. Thus, the group collected and exhibited all that African Americans “made, produced, woven, carved, engraved, invented, written and published” so “that the world may form a correct opinion of the Negro race of this country-to the end that a proper solution of the ‘problem’ may be had from a business, commercial, financial and industrial standpoint; that the unjust and unfair critics of the Negroes may be silenced.”¹⁰ Though the “critics” were unnamed by N.D.E.C., one might assume that they were whites, particularly exhibition organizers, that supported segregation and the subjugation of African Americans, making the statement quite bold in calling out the opponents of their organization and purpose. The acknowledgement of the obstacles facing African Americans supports the idea that the organizational aim of the N.D.E.C. was to expand black agency and African American rights. The exhibits within the Negro Building sought to accomplish the company’s goal of advancing the efforts of African Americans by re-educating all Americans. Lastly, “the unjust and unfair critics” of African Americans is a reference to the racism, prejudice, and white bias that confronted African Americans constantly and certainly the best

⁹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

way to “silence” their critics was to re-educate Americans, teach the true history of African Americans, carefully draw awareness to the injustices they had suffered, and lastly, illustrate their merit, worth, and ultimately, equality to whites and others.¹¹

The N.D.E.C. encountered divisions over tactics and goals for improvement within the African American community. For instance, the perception of some African American activists was that the N.D.E.C. prioritized “business, commercial, financial and industrial” growth for African Americans over immediate political and social equality.¹² Another issue dividing the African American community was whether to achieve the goal of advancement with or without the assistance of the white American community. The decision on the part of the N.D.E.C. to both participate in a white-controlled event and seek the support of white Americans, monetary and otherwise alienated some potential activist supporters. Though some activists disagreed, the N.D.E.C. generally agreed with Booker T. Washington that “the Negro race cannot succeed in any great enterprise without the aid of the whites.”¹³

While certainly a divisive issue for those fighting to advance the rights of African Americans, members of the N.D.E.C. may have chosen to participate in a segregated exposition and reach out to whites for financial and overall support simply because they understood the unfortunate reality of the era. As Giles Jackson later clarified, the reason the organization sought the assistance of white Americans was because it was whites “who make and control the money, who make and execute the laws, who build and run the railroads and navigate the waterway.”¹⁴ Thus, the company prioritized its mission of educating visitors about African Americans over objecting to participating because its efforts would make a big difference and help to create

¹¹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 139.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 140.

¹⁴ Ibid.

positive change for African Americans. In one of his public addresses, Jackson explained that their exhibits would “startle the world” and “astonish those who are unfamiliar with the true condition of the Negro and it will be stimulating to our race.”¹⁵ Clearly the N.D.E.C.’s mission was to pursue the advancement of African Americans through education of their history and many accomplishments and, by doing so, they refused to submit to the white-controlled Jamestown Exposition Company, which would have otherwise excluded African American history and exhibits entirely.

There were numerous noteworthy contributors to the N.D.E.C. and its efforts to create a successful Negro Building and exhibits featuring African Americans at the Jamestown Exposition of 1907. Giles B. Jackson, a practicing lawyer, served as Director-General of the N.D.E.C. and as promoter of the Jamestown Negro Exhibit, was instrumental in getting the project off the ground and was often the most visible member of the company.¹⁶ Other notable members included President W. I. Johnson, Vice-President Reverend A. Binga, Jr., Treasurer R. T. Hill, D. Webster Davis, and many others.¹⁷ Most leaders of the N.D.E.C. were well-educated and leaders in their communities.

Jackson, for instance, had a fascinating background prior to his leadership in the N.D.E.C. Like many African American Virginians in 1907, Jackson was born into slavery due to Virginia’s slave codes. Jackson was born in 1853 in Goochland County, but would gain more opportunity after the Civil War and emancipation.¹⁸ Interestingly, he had a connection to the initial President of the Jamestown Exposition Company, Fitzhugh Lee, prior to the event. According to Jackson, he had been “Lee’s slave and body-servant during the Civil War” and

¹⁵ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 675.

¹⁶ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 162-165.

¹⁸ Ann Field Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the ‘Fighting Editor,’ John Mitchell Jr.*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 108.

“slept by his side in the field” and had a scar on his forehead from “a Yankee bullet,” providing a unique connection between the two men.¹⁹ The veracity has been brought into question by some scholars. Ann Field Alexander, a professor of history at Mary Baldwin College, stated that Jackson’s stories of being Fitzhugh Lee’s body servant or “tending Robert E. Lee’s horse” were suspect and have never been verified.²⁰ Jackson may have emphasized his past connection to Fitzhugh Lee to garner support from white Americans or help promote Washingtonian cooperation between the races.

After the Civil War, Jackson worked a series of brief jobs in Richmond, Virginia before gaining employment “as a servant in the household of John Stewart of Brook Hill, the wealthy father-in-law of Joseph Bryan, the editor of the *Richmond Dispatch*.”²¹ Jackson learned to read and write through his own devices and from the wife of John Stewart, learned law from attorney William H. Beveridge, gained admission to Richmond’s bar in 1887, built his own legal practice, and was well respected in both the white and black communities of Richmond.²² Jackson also served as the attorney for the True Reformers and provided legal counsel for many African Americans in the Richmond area, an admirable effort to protect his people in a legal and judicial system stacked against them.²³ The first black bank of Richmond developed in 1888, called the Savings Bank of the Grand Fountain United Order of True Reformers, was part of the movement to encourage “black institutional development,” ranging from businesses to banks.²⁴

The efforts of African American Virginians to pursue black solidarity by creating its own infrastructure was a product of the white power structure of post-Reconstruction and “Jim

¹⁹ William Hayes Ward, “A Race Exhibition,” *Colored American Magazine*, Vol. XIII, Issue 6 (Boston, MA), December 1, 1907, 447.

²⁰ Alexander, *Race Man*, 108.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lewis A. Randolph and Gayle T. Tate, *Rights for a Reason: The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in Richmond, Virginia*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 100.

Crow,” during which African Americans struggled to gain political, economic, and social inclusion.²⁵ Indeed, the sentiment in much of the black community of Richmond can be summarized by journalist and editor of the *Richmond Planet* John T. Mitchell, Jr., who called on his fellow African Americans to “save money and property” and called out opponents by stating “any colored man who opposes race enterprises among the colored people is his own worst enemy.”²⁶ Jackson’s efforts were vital to the black community in Richmond.

Jackson also had an established relationship with Booker T. Washington and experience following his approach to racial uplift long before the Jamestown Exposition. In August 1900, Jackson gave a speech entitled “The Negro as a Real Estate Dealer,” in which he discussed advancing African American progress “in the real estate world.”²⁷ At the National Negro Business League’s 1900 meeting in Boston, Booker T. Washington introduced Jackson, stating “I have great pleasure in introducing Mr. Giles B. Jackson of Richmond, Va., who will speak upon the subject of real estate,” suggesting a relationship and shared strategy for advancing the cause of African Americans.²⁸ Washington was encouraged by the development of the organization and stated that he had been encouraged by the economic development of black Americans across the nation, but also seemed to exaggerate the cooperation of white Americans and almost blindly optimistic, stating “I have seen a black man who was succeeding in business, who was a taxpayer, and who possessed intelligence and high character, that individual was treated with the highest respect by the members of the white race.”²⁹

²⁵ Randolph and Tate, *Rights for a Reason*, 100.

²⁶ John T. Mitchell, Jr., *Richmond Planet*, Vol. 20, No. 14, 14 March 1903.

²⁷ Giles B. Jackson, “The Negro as a Real Estate Dealer,” In *Proceedings of the National Negro Business League: Its First Meeting Held in Boston, Massachusetts, August 23 and 24, 1900*, (Boston, MA: J.R. Hamm, 1901), 27.

²⁸ Booker T. Washington, In *Proceedings of the National Negro Business League: Its First Meeting Held in Boston, Massachusetts, August 23 and 24, 1900*, (Boston, MA: J.R. Hamm, 1901), 27.

²⁹ Washington, In *Proceedings of the National Negro Business League*, 26.

Concerning the white community, Jackson's comments were a mixed bag, noting the discrimination levied on blacks by whites, but also acknowledging the white friends supporting the black community. On one hand, Jackson noted "the Negro, with only thirty-five years of freedom, turned loose with enmity and hatred by his former master, with all the other nations pointing at him with the finger of scorn ... with the hindrance and obstructions he has encountered since emancipation...has exceed all other races at least 250 per cent."³⁰ Yet, he also acknowledged that despite rampant racism from the white community and stiff discrimination, he did not "mean the white people as a whole are our enemies, for such is not the fact; for our friends among the white people are numbered by the thousands, yes millions, and I am here to say that a large number of those friends are among the Southern people."³¹ Jackson described the efforts of the black community in Richmond and ended his remarks by noting that their community was without a flag, yet, through the "organizing of the colored men of business" and "the leadership of our friend, Booker T. Washington," indicated that their community was on the "road to success."³²

Though certainly an active proponent of gaining rights for his fellow African Americans, Jackson was charged also as a Washington accommodationist in Richmond circles. As there were competing theories on how African Americans should deal with whites and fight for their cause, some African Americans were "embarrassed by his anecdotes" as called him "a handkerchief-head." However, Jackson, an articulate, intelligent, and powerful man in the black community, also saw the benefits of maintaining ties to the white community, despite embarrassing some by playing "the sycophant," by placating white audiences or even resorting to using "self-

³⁰ Jackson, "The Negro as a Real Estate Dealer," In *Proceedings of the National Negro Business League*, 30.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 34.

deprecating humor” to deal with white audiences that were hostile or did not want to hear messages in support of the advancement of the African American community.³³ According to Ann Field Alexander, Jackson was “willing to appear servile in exchange for concessions” from whites and the General Assembly of Virginia.³⁴ In May of 1901, the Commonwealth of Virginia held a political convention in Richmond for the purpose of disenfranchising African American males.³⁵ African American activists actively campaigned against disenfranchisement and protested the convention that aimed to undermine the achievements of the early stages of Reconstruction, including the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.³⁶ Yet, much like the division amongst African Americans over activist approaches, such as the competing ideas of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, there were different tactics employed to defeat disenfranchisement in Virginia. For instance, John Mitchell, Jr. chose to protest against disenfranchisement through editorials he wrote and published in *Planet*.³⁷ Meanwhile, Giles Jackson followed the Washington approach. Considered a “more soft-spoken” African American approach, he went to Virginia’s controlling white elite and “plead the race’s cause.”³⁸ Although efforts failed to stop the enactment of disenfranchisement policies in the state of Virginia, Jackson did not end his activism. He also fought to maintain funding for black education. The effort also failed to stop a new state constitution which cut aid to black student education.³⁹ Nonetheless, these shortcomings and the controversy of his subservient tactics, Jackson’s contributions were important to the growth of the African American community in Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

³³ Alexander, *Race Man*, 108.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 107.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 107-108.

³⁸ Ibid., 108.

³⁹ Alexander, *Race Man*, 113-114.

Jackson, Davis, and the N.D.E.C. were activists in a very real sense and their tactic of choice was to disseminate information and educate fellow African Americans of their people's vast accomplishments in an effort to embolden the younger generation to further advance their race, pursuing equality, end "Jim Crow" segregation and other racist policies and practices across every facet of American life. In their co-authored *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States*, which provided a full account of their activities and the Negro Building at the Jamestown Exposition, Jackson and Davis made it clear that they sought to educate black Americans, as they believed "it has been demonstrated of all races in the world, the Negro knows less about himself."⁴⁰ Given the lack of education opportunities for African Americans, the endeavor to educate fellow African Americans about their race's history and accomplishments was just as important as re-educating white Americans long taught misinformation and to counter prejudiced information about African Americans and other persons of color spread by such movements as the Dunning School. Jackson and Davis explained the necessity of providing a thorough history of African Americans and exhibits on their accomplishments, particularly since Emancipation, stating bluntly that "the rank and file [African Americans] have no conception of the industrial progress of their own race, and even if he learned, but a poor, and at best, partial knowledge of what is going on among our people in this country."⁴¹

Jackson and the N.D.E.C. were not the first to use African Americans exhibits at a world's fair as a tactic for educating the public, that in no way minimized their purpose or mission for the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. Their building and enclosed exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition was in many ways more ambitious than its preceding black exhibits at world's fairs and expositions in Paris and Charleston, and all were methods of seeking to end the

⁴⁰ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 6.

⁴¹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 7.

mistreatment of African Americans and change the racist views of white Americans. Mabel Wilson suggested that many African American leaders deployed “Washington’s strategy of accommodation and utilized major fairs planned for Charleston in 1902 and Jamestown in 1907 to foster white confidence in their industriousness and obedience.”⁴² The N.D.E.C. Negro Building’s jury of awards advisory board believed that “it is generally agreed that in every particular this exhibit surpasses the exhibits made by the colored people at former expositions held at New Orleans, Atlanta and Charleston” and, furthermore, the “beautiful, commodious, Negro Building, designed and constructed by Negroes, is in itself an excellent exhibit of the Negroes’ taste and skill.”⁴³ Thus, at least to those associated with the efforts of the N.D.E.C., the Negro Building and its exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition surpassed the efforts of African Americans at previous world’s fairs and expositions.

Journalists who visited the N.D.E.C.’s Negro Building and enclosed exhibits supported the argument that the N.D.E.C.’s objective in building the African American exhibits and participating in the Jamestown Exposition was to advance the African American civil rights movement through educational activism. In an article entitled “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown” in *Colored American Magazine*, R. W. Thompson drew a similar assessment of the purpose of the exhibits, stating that “the promoters of the Negro exhibit aim to emphasize the educational value of the exposition as a whole to the colored people of America, and the healthful effect the massive aggregation of material in the Negro building will have upon those who, because of ignorance or prejudice, are refusing to acknowledge the Negro as a constructive factor in the civilization of the age.”⁴⁴ Additionally, Thompson cited similar target audiences for the

⁴² Wilson, *Negro Building*, 120.

⁴³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 203.

⁴⁴ Thompson, “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown,” *Colored American Magazine*, Vol. XIII, Issue 1 (Boston, MA), July 1, 1907, 26.

information found in the Negro Building: African Americans who would benefit from seeing the numerous examples of educational, technological, artistic, economic, and industrial accomplishments of their fellow people across the United States, science and anthropological experts that “take nothing for granted” and “demand concrete and tangible proof of all that any people may claim for themselves,” and white Americans that remained ignorant of the advancement of African Americans.⁴⁵

The N.D.E.C. faced many barriers to accomplishing its goals. The cornerstone of the Negro Building was laid on February 14, 1907, and their exhibits officially opened to the public in July of 1907. However, the N.D.E.C.’s work began years before when they were officially chartered on August 13, 1903.⁴⁶ Navigating the logistics of seeking and receiving permission and approval to create an exhibit from the Jamestown Exposition Company, requesting and receiving funding for their project, publicizing their project, finding materials and items to exhibit from around the nation, having the items to be exhibited transported to Norfolk, finding black architects and craftsmen willing to work for relatively little money, constructing the Negro Building under time and logistical constraints, creating the exhibits in a timely manner, rallying support for their efforts from the African American and white American communities, and, finally, convincing Americans to visit their building and enclosed exhibits. While some obstacles were within the control of the N.D.E.C., others were outside their control and threatened to undermine their efforts and potential success.

Following the company’s official chartering, Jackson and other leaders approached the obstacle of paying for their plans by appealing to the United States Congress, state governors, legislative bodies, and individuals to raise money for their project. Richmond’s *The Time*

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 675.

Dispatch announced the chartering of the N.D.E.C. with capital of \$800,000 for the promotion of “the inventions and progress of the negro at the Jamestown International Exposition.”⁴⁷ In addition to appealing to governments for funding assistance, the company also appealed to members of the African American community, churches, societies and newspapers for help funding their project through the “purchase of the capital stock which is placed within the reach of all, shares being \$10 each; to assist in collecting all articles within the classes above mentioned, and such other things of value to be placed upon exhibition.”⁴⁸ After appealing to fellow African Americans, Jackson pleaded the company’s case by reminding white readers that the state of Virginia should contribute a great deal since “the Negroes first landed upon the soil of Virginia” and “the relations between the two races here are so well and satisfactorily defined.” It ended by thanking those that provide contributions and providing addresses in Richmond and Williamsburg for those mailing donations in a published appeal “to the white people of Richmond and the State of Virginia” that sought the public’s financial contributions and attendance to support their Negro Building and the overall Exposition.⁴⁹ The support the N.D.E.C. enjoyed from “the National Negro Business League of the United States, of which Booker T. Washington is president,” and influential white politicians such as “Ex-President Grover Cleveland, the Hon. John W. Daniel, Senator of the United States, from Virginia; Ex-Governor J. Hoge Tyler, of Virginia, and Governor C.B. Aycock, of North Carolina” were cited to convince potential donors and stock holders of the merit of the project.⁵⁰ Despite formally requesting monetary contributions from most states, particularly those with large African American populations, North Carolina was the only state to make a direct monetary

⁴⁷ “Negro Development Co.,” *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), August 16, 1903, 22., accessed June 24, 2015, NewsBank.

⁴⁸ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁴⁹ ⁴⁹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

appropriation, of \$5,000, toward the Negro exhibition at the Jamestown Exposition.⁵¹ Jackson and the N.D.E.C. had better luck petitioning the U.S. Congress, though they still did not receive the full amount requested.

The N.D.E.C. petitioned the United States Congress for assistance because they determined “that it will require the expenditure of a larger amount of money than at first anticipated” to create buildings that featured African American centered exhibits at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition. They justified turning to the national government for monetary assistance because their race accounted for more than ten percent of the nation’s population and promoted the idea that the acknowledgement and display of African American growth and achievements was a national rather than a Virginia issue.⁵² Jackson and the N.D.E.C. presented convincing arguments in their petition to Congress that focused on the merit of the Jamestown Exposition and the worthiness of African American participation at such a momentous celebration, stating that “it is not a State affair, but a National affair, of the great importance to both races.” They requested an appropriation of one million and two hundred thousand dollars.⁵³

The petition explained the merit of supporting and funding African American participation and creating exhibits for the Jamestown Exposition. Jackson carefully reminded members of Congress of the history of African Americans. For instance, in one sentence, Jackson boldly reminded Congress that African Americans were part of United States history beginning with their origin in the nation as forced migrants of the slave trade. Jackson also reminded Congress that African Americans suffered through slavery for over two hundred and

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

fifty years, and furthermore, that they continued to struggle to improve their standing in the nation, stating in the petition that African Americans traced their heritage to the Africans that came next after the first settlers in this country, and under the peculiar condition under which we came, and under which we lived for two hundred and fifty years, and under which we are now struggling to improve, we think this the greatest opportunity to show the world our capabilities as a race, as a result of what we have done in the improvement of our condition within the last thirty-eight years, and to exhibit the results on this great occasion, while this commemoration will be held in Virginia upon the ground where we first landed in this country.⁵⁴

Additionally, the petition harped on the fact that African Americans comprised over ten percent of the American population in an effort to strengthen the request and explain that African Americans rarely, if ever, asked for appropriations from Congress.

Lastly, the N.D.E.C. told Congress that their previous monetary promises to African Americans in the post-Civil War years were unfulfilled. For instance, many African American Union soldiers never received the money promised by the Fifty-seventh Congress because “of their inability to establish their right, on account of their condition of slavery, and the manner in which thousands were enlisted.” The Company suggested that the current Congress provide \$200,000 to their company to honor all of the deceased African American union soldiers and their families.⁵⁵ The remaining million dollars requested to fund their cause was justified by reminding Congress that many of the depositors to the Freedman’s Bank following the Civil War were victims of fraud and never had their deposit returned and, furthermore, repayment was

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

pursued by the United States Senate, but was thwarted by the House of Representatives.⁵⁶ Again, Jackson's wording was very compelling as the petition stated "we feel that in making us the appropriation for the Exposition will in some measure repay the heirs of the deceased depositors of the said Freedman's bank."⁵⁷ Finally, the N.D.E.C. ended its petition by reminding Congress of the faithful service of African Americans during slavery and the fight for the Union during the Civil War and reassured Congress that the leaders and the organization itself were trustworthy and capable men.⁵⁸

Despite the eloquent petition and solid arguments on June 31, 1906, the United States Congress passed an act appropriating only \$100,000 to the N.D.E.C. for its African American exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition.⁵⁹ Afterward, the N.D.E.C. never spoke ill, at least publicly or in written word, concerning the fact that it received less than a tenth of what they requested. Instead, the N.D.E.C. organizers expanded their efforts to seek further funding by sending very similarly worded petitions to many state legislatures and governors, particularly of states with large African American populations and "while replies were received from a large number of the Governors of the various States, the State of North Carolina, was the only one to make a direct appropriation" of \$5,000.⁶⁰ Despite a limited response and relatively little financial support, the N.D.E.C. managed to move forward with their project, dealing next with the logistical challenge of spreading awareness about its efforts in the African American community, requesting items to be exhibited, and finally accumulating exhibited items in Norfolk, Virginia.

The long and arduous task of spreading the word of their goal and encouraging African American organizations, schools, and individuals to contribute to their exhibits commenced. For

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

instance, Jackson and the company sent field agents throughout the United States, and when they reported on a potential exhibitor, the proposed exhibitor was sent a circular letter “with an attached blank to be filled out setting forth the nature of the exhibit, its value, size and general description, and the date when it would be ready for shipment” to Jamestown.⁶¹ Jackson accomplished the extraordinary task of accumulating items for the African American exhibits by traveling “from one end of the country to the other” in order to meet and network with leaders in many cities and counties, asking and accumulating information about the history and progress of African Americans across the nation and seeking assistance in collecting information and exhibits for the Negro Building.⁶² Jackson and the N.D.E.C.’s goal was to showcase what African Americans “made, produced, woven, carved, engraved, invented, written and published” and everything they had accomplished in order to provide the world and visitors to the Jamestown Exposition with the “correct opinion of the Negro race of this country” so that a “proper solution of the ‘problem’ may be had from a business, commercial, financial and industrial standpoint; that the unjust and unfair critics of the Negroes may be silenced.”⁶³ Believing that the African American race was “on trial” and each African American “must appear as a witness for the defense,” *The Freeman*, an Indianapolis, Indiana newspaper encouraged “every man, woman and child” to assist the N.D.E.C. “by creating a sentiment favorable to the exhibit, and do all they can do dispel any possible doubts or fears of the timid, and to counteract any semblance of hostility” from “false idealists and professional ‘knockers.’”⁶⁴ Despite the challenge of coordinating the accumulation of exhibit materials, it

⁶¹ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 147.

⁶² Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁶³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁶⁴ “The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown,” *The Freeman*, (Indianapolis, IN), March 23, 1907.

appeared that Jackson would have support from a large part of the African American community across the nation.

Another challenge outside of fundraising was to find an African American architect and contractors willing to design and build the Negro Building on the site of the Exposition using limited financial resources and in an extraordinarily limited amount of time.⁶⁵ In fact, some inside the N.D.E.C. doubted whether a competent African American architect and contractor could be found, but, others “insisted that to have a Negro exhibit in a building erected by white mechanics, would be to discount our own enterprise, and to say to the visiting world, ‘behold our incapacity to build the very roof over our heads.’”⁶⁶ Ultimately, the N.D.E.C. hired William Sidney Pittman, “the son-in-law of Booker T. Washington, who was an architect commissioned to design the Negro Building for the Jamestown Exposition.”⁶⁷ By all accounts, Pittman did an exquisite job, designing a building of 40,000 square feet of exhibit space, offices, retiring rooms, two large concert halls with an ornate and large front porch, four columns, and seven entrances.⁶⁸ The next obstacle for the N.D.E.C. was securing contractors to build with little pay, narrow time constraints, and debilitating difficulties in transporting materials and labor to the Exposition site, particularly given that the Exposition grounds was on undeveloped land in Norfolk.⁶⁹ The building and construction plans were reduced twice and the salary for the contractor was increased to \$40,000 from \$30,000 in an effort to more easily secure a contractor, enabling the appointment of S.H. Bolling as the senior member of the contract-winning firm and A.J. Everett as the junior contractor.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “A Successful Architect,” *Colored American Magazine* (Boston, MA), December 1, 1906, 71.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 173.

⁷⁰ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 138.

Financial and logistical nightmares were continually overcome by the N.D.E.C., which worked diligently with what they were provided to make the best African American building and exhibits possible. The pressure to successfully complete the project continued even after securing the architect and contractors, however, as the construction was impeded by limited money, only eighty days to complete the project, and the difficulties of transporting materials and labor, which hampered the building of many components of the Jamestown Exposition and even delayed the opening of portions of the Ter-Centennial Celebration.⁷¹ Giles Jackson noted that the grounds of the exhibition were approximately nine miles from the nearest shipping point and though there were sixteen transportation lines that converged on Norfolk, all of them were transferred to a single track railroad that headed to the Exposition, causing awful delays, making it fortunate if one's delivery reached the Exposition grounds within another ten days' time.⁷² Convincing the African American community to support the N.D.E.C.'s project proved to be just as difficult as the other challenges. The division among supporters and critics of the efforts of the N.D.E.C. to create an African American exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition is best understood in the context of the deep racial division in the United States in the era of Jim Crow segregation and burgeoning civil rights movement. African Americans advocating for civil rights and racial justice, including the N.D.E.C., used opportunities presented by the fairs and expositions of the era to promote their own cause of furthering the message of their advancement, civility, and ultimately, equality. Historian Mabel O. Wilson noted in *Negro Building: Back Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* that "When confronted with these powerful and persuasive narratives of civilization, black Americans used the fairs to vigorously respond to how they were

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

being portrayed and positioned.”⁷³ Figures such as Ida B. “Wells, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Mary Church Terrell, Kelly Miller, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Carter G. Woodson, Alain Locke, Claude Barnett, Horace Clayton, Margaret Burroughs, and a host of other fair builders (primarily from the black elite and intelligentsia) sought to disprove the bleak forecasts augured by their fellow white citizens by taking measure of their own advancement” and offering “bold counternarratives to American progress.”⁷⁴

Even the N.D.E.C.’s Executive Committee’s report argued that the segregation and isolation of the Negro exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition put its exhibits at a strategic disadvantage from other exhibits, in terms of attendance and overall reception. The Negro exhibit itself was “an afterthought” and was part of “an annex on a reservation of six acres.”⁷⁵ The Jamestown Ter-Centennial Committee of the U.S. Congress acknowledged the segregation of the N.D.E.C.’s Negro Building, stating that “isolation proved both a benefit and a disadvantage; a disadvantage in that visitors were compelled to go to this particular spot to see the work of the colored people, whose handicraft would have compared favorably with that of the white exhibitors if displayed alongside.”⁷⁶ The Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission tried to dismiss their neglect of African Americans and the segregation of the N.D.E.C.’s exhibits by sounding positive and stating “the benefits more than offset” the disadvantage of the segregation of the exhibit, including “the freedom of the managers of the Negro Exhibit to make a display in all lines of skill, which were both varied and comprehensive.”⁷⁷ Regarding segregation in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the newspaper *Topeka Plaindealer* encouraged visitors to the

⁷³ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 167.

⁷⁶ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 141.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Jamestown Exposition and reassured skeptics that “everybody will have an opportunity to witness the thousand and one evidences of progress made by both races in the past three centuries” and “colored visitors will have access to every portion of the Exposition.”⁷⁸ Despite the efforts to reassure potential visitors, the exposition itself was segregated. There were separate water faucets for black and white visitors and the various ethnic groups on display were placed in “peripheral locations otherwise slighted,” despite being popular attractions for visitors, such as the Warpath and N.D.E.C. Negro building.⁷⁹

Despite acknowledging the challenges faced by the N.D.E.C. and the division in the activist community over tactics, Jackson was defiant, noting that the African American people were “divided in sentiment, which made the undertaking seemingly impossible; and yet the results will justify the most sanguine hope of the most ardent friends of the race.”⁸⁰ Jackson remained optimistic, believing that the efforts of the N.D.E.C. resulted in a successful African American exhibit that “silenced the croakers, gratified the friends beyond expression, made friends of the enemies, and indeed it may be said that ‘they who came to scoff, remained to pray.’”⁸¹ Ultimately, those visitors left with “a greater respect for our [African American] people or prove[d] themselves too prejudiced to accept of indisputable evidence of the powers of a people.”⁸²

Yet, the goal of the N.D.E.C. to advance the status of African Americans through a visible display of their achievement, intellect, and importance to American history was different from the goal or mission statement of the Jamestown Exposition Company. As Wilson noted,

⁷⁸ “Jamestown Exposition Negro Visitors Will Receive Same Treatment as the Whites – Everything Will be Open,” *Topeka Plaindealer*, (Topeka, KS), March 29, 1907.

⁷⁹ Gleach, “Pocahontas at the Fair: Crafting Identities at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition,” 425.

⁸⁰ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 6.

⁸¹ Wilson, *Negro Building*, 6.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

most world's fairs and expositions had a very different focus indeed: "The U.S. world's fairs were founded on the mutually beneficial tethering of the mythos of democratic republicanism to the liberalism of the market economy" and were initiated by "the elites of a particular city or region-railroad titans, industrialists, newspaper publishers, and scions of privileged families-proposed to local and national governments to host expositions around themes of international trade and national commemoration."⁸³ The efforts of the N.D.E.C. challenged the focus of the Jamestown Exposition and other world's fairs by promoting a more inclusive democracy.

The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, A.D. 1907, published in 1909 after the Exposition's conclusion, simultaneously praised the result of the Negro building's exhibits while also insulting African Americans by calling them "semi-barbaric." It stated that "no one interested in the study of ethnology and the evolution of a race from a state of semi-barbarism to useful citizenship could visit the Negro exhibit without being profoundly impressed."⁸⁴ Meanwhile, R.W. Thompson praised the exhibits and the building, concluding that "the Negro exhibit at Jamestown, far from celebrating the advent of slavery into the American Republic, is serving as an accurate time-keeper of the progress of the race, marking one by one, the three hundred mile-posts left behind on our journey from the heights, stimulating our energies and incalculably broadening our range of vision" in an article he wrote just prior to the official public opening of the Negro Building on the Exposition grounds.⁸⁵ Thompson so believed in the merit of the N.D.E.C.'s building and enclosed exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition that he called it a "the divine mission" that would "set up a new standard of attainment for the race itself."⁸⁶ Other visitors reacted similarly. Rev. D. Webster Davis

⁸³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁸⁴ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 675.

⁸⁵ Thompson, "The Negro Exhibit at Jamestown," 26.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

believed that “no Negro in the land could afford to miss the vast opportunity such a display” offered and gave the N.D.E.C. exhibits “a hearty note of approval.”⁸⁷

Despite encountering extraordinary obstacles, the N.D.E.C. created a stunning Negro Building with a wide array of African American exhibits. The Negro Building itself was a testament to the designing and building capabilities of African Americans. Once inside, visitors were greeted with performing groups and exhibits that featured all items created by African Americans, including art, inventions, textiles, and other items. In fact, the architect, Sydney Pittman, “was the first negro whose design had even been accepted by the Government” and the ornate building was completed by African American contractors as well.⁸⁸ Numerous notable exhibits were housed within the Negro Building that helped the N.D.E.C. accomplish its mission of illustrating the history, industriousness, accomplishments, and worth of African Americans. Visitors to the Negro Building were greeted by a dozen African American male and female singers employed to perform two concerts daily.⁸⁹ A feature that demonstrated the intelligence and medical abilities of African Americans was the Emergency Hospital Exhibit, headed by a committee of African American physicians that demonstrated their work in a separate building from the main Negro exhibit consisting of three rooms, controlled by resident physician Dr. James F. Lawson, in which “many cases of injury and sudden illness were treated.”⁹⁰ Another functional and noteworthy feature for guests of the Negro Building was an operating bank branch of “The Savings Bank of the Grand United Order of True Reformer’s.”⁹¹ Other exhibits featured

⁸⁷ “Short Flights,” *The Freeman*, Indianapolis, IN, August 24, 1807. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 12C55F216731E7B0.

⁸⁸ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 675.

⁸⁹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 186.

⁹⁰ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 186.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

collections of African American made, published, and invented items ranging from collections of newspapers, magazines, and books to art work.

The N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building and enclosed exhibits had notable visitors as well. In fact, President Roosevelt visited, as Giles Jackson remarked:

After inspecting all the exhibits carefully, accompanied by Mrs. Roosevelt, Hon. Victor H. Metcalf, Secretary of the Navy; Governor Terrell, of Georgia, and others. President Roosevelt said in parting: 'My friend, I can simply say one word of greeting, it is a great pleasure to be here to go through this magnificent building and to see the unmistakable evidences of progress you are making, as shown by the exhibits, I find here. I congratulate you upon it; may good luck be with you.'⁹²

Additionally, "Hon. George B. Cortelyou, Secretary of the Treasury, and chairman of the Jamestown Ter-centennial Commission, visited the Negro Building on July 3rd" and stated:

Mr. Chairman: I want to say to you that I am delighted to have been able to visit you, and I congratulate you most heartily upon what you have done. I think in making this exhibit, you have chosen the way of winning the confidence of the right thinking people; because, in making it, you show capacity, signifying progress, progress consistent with your self respect, progress that has come through self help, the kind of progress that wins its way through the world everywhere. You are, indeed, to be congratulated upon what you have already accomplished. May the leaders of our race, those who have your best interest at heart, lead in the way of the progress you have indicated here, and may the people of all sections lend a helping hand as you strive to solve the problem that confronts you.⁹³

⁹² Ibid., 196.

⁹³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 197.

Praise for the African American exhibit poured in to Giles Jackson. Cortelyou did not directly state what the problem was that confronted African Americans, but he either referenced the commonly held racist belief that African Americans were a less civilized race or, more likely, intended the struggle of African Americans to gain equality and civil rights in the United States. Virginia Governor Claude A. Swanson wrote to Giles Jackson that he “visited and examined several times the Negro Exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition, and was very much pleased with it” as the “well collected and well exhibited” Negro Building “indicated the great progress that is being made by this race.”⁹⁴ Meanwhile, a letter sent to Giles Jackson from North Carolina Governor, R.B. Glenn, stated “I have no hesitation in saying that the Negro exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition was a success, and deserved the approval of all good citizens, white and colored” because the “whole exhibit was well managed and creditable, showing the progress of the Negro from the time of his emancipation up to the present time, and giving a better idea of his advancement and capability than has been heretofore shown.”⁹⁵ In his letter to Giles Jackson, Andrew L. Harris stated that he “was very agreeably surprised at the wonderful advance made by the colored people of the United States as evidenced by the exhibit there made.”⁹⁶

Virtually all of the comments from white American policy makers and dignitaries at the national and state level indicated pleasure at visiting the N.D.E.C.’s African American exhibits and many indicated surprise at how much advancement their race had made since the Emancipation Proclamation. The acknowledgement of surprise at the advancement of African Americans is an indication that most white visitors believed African Americans to be inferior to white Americans or previously failed to see their equality. If the Jamestown Exposition Company was in charge of exhibiting and displaying information on African Americans, the

⁹⁴ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 260.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

outcome would not have been as positive in making inroads to counter racial prejudice. The acknowledgements of fine exhibits and building on African Americans and the progress and advancement of African Americans was a product of the work done by the N.D.E.C., to display its race's accomplishments rather than allowing white exposition organizers to control the fate and content of the African American display at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition.

August 3, 1907 was "set aside by the Jamestown Exposition Company as Negro Day," proofing that the commemoration of African Americans was an afterthought for organizers of the Jamestown Exposition that were much more concerned with celebrating the white history of the United States.⁹⁷ Dr. Booker T. Washington was the orator of "Negro Day," and there assembled to hear him, one of the largest and most representative audiences of colored people ever gathered in this country.⁹⁸ Of the ten thousand assembled probably two thousand were teachers, ministers and other leaders who had been in attendance upon the Hampton Negro Conference and the program of the day included an exhibition drill by two hundred Hampton students, led by their own brass band, the address by Dr. Washington and a concert by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers."⁹⁹ Dr. Booker T. Washington remarked that he was "surprised and pleased at the neat and attractive appearance of the Negro Building and at the large exhibit, which has been installed in such an attractive and instructive manner."¹⁰⁰ Acknowledging the merit of Americans seeing the exhibit, especially African Americans, Washington also stated in his speech that he wished "every member of my race could come here and witness these evidences of progress in agricultural, mechanical, house-keeping, educational, moral and religious development."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 149.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 200.

¹⁰⁰ Booker T. Washington, quoted in *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 149.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The praise of the displayed content of the African American exhibit confirmed the merit of the N.D.E.C.'s efforts. The exhibits of the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building contained paintings and artworks, sculptures, photography, sewing, inventions, industrial equipment, farming exhibits, literature and other items also were judged and awarded silver, bronze, and gold medals.¹⁰² The Jamestown Exposition's Jury of Awards reported that the N.D.E.C.'s exhibit was "surprisingly large and varied, and in many ways full of significance" as "practically every section of the country is represented by exhibits, and their variety is highly illustrative of the increasing diversity of interests of the colored people."¹⁰³ The Jury of Awards' report went on to say "the high quality, too, of so large a number of exhibits shows in a striking way the advance being made by these people" and the jury agreed that the exhibits "surpasses the exhibits made by the colored people at former expositions held at New Orleans, Atlanta, and Charleston."¹⁰⁴ The Jury of Awards also praised the architectural design of the Negro Building, "the pleasing decorations of the building," and "the effective installation of the exhibits."¹⁰⁵ While the Jury of Awards provided high praise for the N.D.E.C. and its exhibits, it also provided a veiled insult and proof of a belief that black Americans were inferior to white Americans by stating that their displays showed advancement for their race and were, at times, of surprising quality to the jury. The surprise noted by the jury revealed the underlying quality of African American created items on display in the African American exhibits and provided some confirmation of the merit of the N.D.E.C.'s mission in participating in the Jamestown Exposition to advance their race and challenge the preconceived stereotypes of prejudice toward their race.

¹⁰² *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 149.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

One notable gold medal award winner was Meta Vaux Warrick of Philadelphia for her Negro tableaux showing the history of African Americans that most certainly contributed to a more accurate telling of African American history.¹⁰⁶ Meta Warrick, later Meta Warrick Fuller after she married, created a series of fourteen dioramas, including *Landing of First Twenty Slaves at Jamestown* that provided visitors to the Negro Building a chronologically based depiction of the American experience of African Americans.¹⁰⁷ Fitzhugh Brundage argued that Warrick effectively added new ways of depicting the African American experience as the dioramas of Warrick used visuals to offer a new view of African Americans as the centerpiece of the American story, effectively “claiming a position the dominant white narrative denied.”¹⁰⁸ Visual exhibits were especially effective for educating visitors, particularly the illiterate, and “Warrick’s tableaux embodied a long-standing and conscious tactic of African American leaders and activists during the postbellum era to use aural and visual means to reach the black masses.”¹⁰⁹ Brundage brilliantly explained the simple fact of why visual and auditory approaches, such as art, music and theater, were much more important to reaching and educating African Americans, stating that “comparatively high rates of illiteracy and poverty among blacks impeded an campaign to impart a sense of collective history and tradition to blacks.”¹¹⁰ Warrick’s dioramas, in addition to “its depiction of the progressive and upward evolution of African Americans, was intended to provide evidence of the modernity of African Americans to whites and blacks alike.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 677.

¹⁰⁷ Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’”, 1368.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1369.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’”, 1368.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1370.

Warrick's tableaux illustrated the history of African Americans from the African slave trade to the early twentieth century, culminating with a positive look to the future progress of the race. Brundage pointed out that Warrick's tableaux did not necessarily present a forceful view of the demeaning, horrible nature of slavery, but rather, was more repressed and nuanced:

"Warrick's scenes of slavery are suggestive of the multiple layers of meaning conveyed by her tableaux. At first glance, the scenes hint that she contrived to repress, or at the very least, to channel narrowly the memories of the ordeal of bondage. The image of slavery called up by Warrick's models was far more reserved than the depictions of servitude that had characterized, for instance, the speeches and writings of antebellum abolitionists. There was no dioramic equivalent to the vivid, melodramatic descriptions of floggings, murders, rapes, and slave auctions of abolitionist lore."¹¹²

Warrick's first tableaux featured the origins of slavery, illustrating the arrival of slaves to Jamestown in 1619, emphasizing the coercion of Africans to America, whereas the second tableaux depicted the toil of slaves in an antebellum cotton plantation, as Brundage noted that one could ascertain a position like that of Booker T. Washington, that "slavery had taught Africans valuable skills and a work ethic."¹¹³ In another diorama, Warrick emphasized the growing black agency at slavery's end in the United States, illustrating "the founding of the Free African Society" that later developed into the AME Church and emphasizing the "role blacks had played in propagating 'Christian civilization.'"¹¹⁴ Other dioramas illustrated the momentous occasion of first experiences of African American freedmen after the Civil War, including dwellings owned by African Americans, the portrayal of education in a "log cabin schoolhouse" with a male and female teacher and black pupils enthusiastically returning to class after recess,

¹¹² Ibid., 1384.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Brundage, "Meta Warrick's 1907 'Negro Tableaux'", 1389.

emphasizing the link between freedom, education, empowerment, and the power of knowledge.¹¹⁵ Finally, the last diorama was set in the present and depicted the achievements of civilization of African Americans, including scenes of African Americans on their farm, contractors and builders working, banking scenes, scenes of the home and church, and lastly, commencement day.¹¹⁶ Warrick's tableaux inspired and left an impression on visitors and clearly represented the ideals of Warrick, the N.D.E.C. and other African Americans seeking agency against discrimination.

Though both the N.D.E.C. and the Jamestown Exposition Company hoped for more visitors, the audience was large enough to validate the efforts of the N.D.E.C. to educate visitors about the many accomplishments of African Americans, their true history, and promote equality. Three quarters of a million people visited the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building during the Jamestown Exposition and September 13, 1907 "was the banner day in attendance at the Negro Building, no less than eighteen thousand people having passed through the building on that day."¹¹⁷ Indeed, the N.D.E.C.'s exhibits had thrust the power of displaying African American people into the hands of African Americans, unlike the exhibits on American Indians and Filipinos. The Negro Building served as a source of pride and "a social center for the colored people who attend[ed] the Exposition."¹¹⁸ Yet, many believed it fell far short of its goals. The Jamestown Ter-Centennial Committee said that the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building "proved anything but a financial success...due to the fact that the attendance fell far short of all reasonable expectations."¹¹⁹ While that assessment of attendance may be true, the congressional committee failed to

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1390.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1392-93.

¹¹⁷ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 200.

¹¹⁸ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 204.

¹¹⁹ *Final Report of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Commission*, U.S. Congress, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set Vol. No. 5403, Session Vol. No. 15, 141.

acknowledge contributing factors such as the financial failure of the entire Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition and the segregation and isolation of the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building on the grounds of the event.

Though Thompson and other visitors were moved by the N.D.E.C.'s exhibits, its attendance was lower than expected, disappointing the Jamestown Exposition Company from a financial standpoint and weakening the potency of the N.D.E.C.'s effort. Jackson and Davis reflected on the low turnout for the Exposition and the Negro Building when they stated that "the saddest feature of the Exposition is the fact that so few of our people were able to see it, and thus gain the inspiration that such a scene must have given the dullest soul."¹²⁰ The charter that was agreed upon provided the N.D.E.C. with a percentage of the profit from sales and ticket fees, but due to the attendance falling "far short of all reasonable expectations," it was not a financial success, or at least not as much as was initially expected.¹²¹ The low turnout does not diminish the contribution of the N.D.E.C. to the movement to advance the rights of African Americans as they exhibited a true African American history and collected and displayed an impressive array of items created by African Americans. Furthermore, despite lower than hoped for attendance the exhibits of the N.D.E.C. resonated and made a positive impression on those that did visit. Even *The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, A.D. 1907* believed visitors to the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building were left with a positive impression, assuming they did not allow racism or personal prejudices to cloud their judgment, stating that "the unprejudiced observer could see what had been done during the forty-two years that had elapsed since slavery was abolished and could not fail to predict hopefully for the future."¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹²¹ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro*, 168.

¹²² Keiley, ed., *The Official Blue Book*, 675.

The dreams of the N.D.E.C. did not end with the Jamestown Exposition, but rather continued with the writing and publication of *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States*. Their book was an attempt to reach African Americans that were unable to visit the Negro Building and their enclosed exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition and to “write a full history of this magnificent display to inspire the youth of the land to high endeavor, to encourage them in every laudable attempt to rise, and let them see what has already been accomplished, and thus give hope for the years to come.”¹²³ While the Negro Building and its exhibits were aimed at educating all Americans and telling the true story of African American history to white Americans, there was no doubt that much of the hope surrounding their project was aimed at younger generations, as Jackson and Davis wanted every young African American to attend the exhibit and, after their book was published the following year in 1908, they wanted every “Negro school boy and girl in this land” to have a copy of their book and “by virtue of that knowledge, be inspired to do his part to build up to greater heights, the race with which he is identified.”¹²⁴

When the Jamestown Exposition ended, members of the N.D.E.C. continued to fight for the advancement of African Americans. Aside from writing *The Industrial History of the Negro Race of the United States*, Jackson and the N.D.E.C. worked to move their building and exhibits from the grounds of the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition to Richmond to enable additional visitors to see their collection featuring the achievements of African Americans. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported that “A large and enthusiastic audience of negroes in the galleries and a small but appreciate white audience greeted the colored speakers at the mass-meeting held at the Academy of Music tonight in the interest of the proposed removal of the negro exhibit at the

¹²³ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 8.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

Jamestown Exposition to Richmond for establishment as a negro museum.”¹²⁵ The movement of the exhibits to Richmond affirms the popularity of the N.D.E.C.’s efforts and provides evidence that their organization’s goal of educating the American public, black and white, about the achievements of African Americans to advance their cause would continue long after the Jamestown Exposition formally ended. Jackson and the Negro Historical and Industrial Association organized a “Big Negro Exposition” in the summer of 1915 to celebrate the fifty-year anniversary of the “freedom of the negro” at the end of the American Civil War and to display the achievements made by African Americans since then.¹²⁶ Jackson must have felt that the efforts of the N.D.E.C. at the Jamestown Exposition were not in vain and, furthermore, were worth continuing to pursue to advance African Americans. The 1915 summer celebration of fifty years of African American freedom was touted to “eclipse the negro exhibit at Jamestown.”¹²⁷

Jackson and Davis wanted white Americans who read their co-published *The Industrial History of the Negro Race* to be pleased with the progress that African Americans had made since Emancipation and to have a greater respect for African Americans and, ultimately, to abandon their prejudice. Jackson and Davis provided clear evidence supporting their purpose to help African Americans when they stated that “when our enemies and villifiers read it they must at least have a greater respect for our people or prove themselves too prejudiced to accept of indisputable evidence of the powers of a people.”¹²⁸ Therefore, the N.D.E.C. educated Americans with an accurate and fair history of African Americans, thus helping to reduce racism and discrimination in American society, and inspire African Americans to fight for and reach even greater heights of economic, political, and social equality in the United States. Furthermore,

¹²⁵ “The Negro Exhibit.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), February 2, 1908.

¹²⁶ “Washington is After Big Negro Exhibition,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), January 17, 1915. Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: America's Historical Newspapers, SQN: 1362EEDECB971636.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Jackson and Davis, *The Industrial History of the Negro Race*, 7.

whereas other fairs and anthropological exhibits were organized by whites and belittled blacks, the N.D.E.C. exhibits were created by African Americans to better represent their race. As explained by Brundage, “the distinction between exhibiting and representing blacks was not just authorship but also agency” and Warrick’s tableaux “highlighted blacks’ creative capacity, manifest in the very form of Warrick’s creation, as well as black agency depicted in the narrative itself.”¹²⁹ Furthermore, the N.D.E.C. and exhibit contributors such as Warrick each internally grappled with the imperialistic and racist “ideological schema that undergirded fairs” and, after determining that participation outweighed nonparticipation, challenged racism, pursued equality, and expressed their ideas about race in their own unique way.¹³⁰

It is difficult to measure the contribution their exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition made to the African American civil rights movement. The N.D.E.C.’s mission to represent African Americans at the Jamestown Exposition with exhibits displaying their accurate, unbiased history, their intelligence, and accomplishments in all arenas, including artistic, musical, and literary creativity, was a powerful means for advancement. The act of combating the Jamestown Exposition Company’s exclusion or racist displays of African Americans was their most powerful form of activism. However, there was deep conflict within the African American community over the best tactic to advance the fight against racism and discrimination. While many viewed the N.D.E.C. as too accommodating to the white interests of the fair’s organizers and placating a racist, segregated society, other African Americans believed the mission of the N.D.E.C. outweighed the negatives of participating in a segregated event in a segregated state. The positive reviews of white politicians, exposition visitors, and the Jamestown Exposition Company itself prove that the N.D.E.C.’s efforts did help sway the opinion of and educate

¹²⁹ Brundage, “Meta Warrick’s 1907 ‘Negro Tableaux’”, 1371.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

visitors on the history and accomplishments of African Americans. Furthermore, unlike the displays and marginalization of other races, such as Filipinos, the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building and exhibits at the Jamestown Exposition were, in fact, created and managed by African Americans rather than whites. Consequently, the tone and makeup of the exhibits was remarkably different from those designed by the Jamestown Exposition Company's white leadership and most preceding fairs. Inspired by Washington's vision of black advancement through economic participation, Giles Jackson and the N.D.E.C. powerfully illustrated what black Americans had accumulated and accomplished since the American Civil War. They fought against the exclusion of their race by the white community and the Jamestown Exposition Company, and pursued equality and advancement of their cause through education and resistance. Yet, the N.D.E.C. also cooperated with a prejudiced, segregated event and, in the eyes of many, including W.E.B. DuBois, fed into the hands of white America. In the end, despite the problems associated with the Jamestown Exposition and somewhat disappointing attendance figures, the N.D.E.C. exhibits altered the perception of African Americans for some visitors. The N.D.E.C. contributed to broader African American civil rights activism by celebrating African American accomplishments and promoting a more truthful education of their race. The N.D.E.C.'s exhibits also represented the climax of the Booker T. Washington accommodationist approach to civil rights as the W.E.B. DuBois of pursuing immediate civil and political rights gained more traction as the twentieth century progressed. Yet, ultimately the N.D.E.C.'s effort to challenge the dominant celebration of the United States' white history was an effort to advance the African American race worthy of acknowledgement and a notable contribution to the African American civil rights movement.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

Race was an integral part of the 1907 Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition. While not all displays of race were deliberate, it was difficult to divide a world's fair designed to celebrate America's founding at Jamestown from the deeply racially divided nation on the outside of the grounds of the exposition. Ultimately, the displays of race were dictated by white Americans and the Jamestown Exposition Company. The deliberate commemoration of American Indians who were conquered by English settlers and displays of race on The Warpath, that included the Filipino reservation and exhibits on the Eskimos of Alaska, and far away "exotic" places such as Egypt and Japan, were controlled by white Americans and did not deviate drastically from other fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The efforts of the N.D.E.C., however, were fundamentally different because they represented African Americans actively refusing to allow white Americans to ignore race or display racist, skewed information about them. Indeed, the N.D.E.C.'s Negro Building and its exhibits was a powerful form of activism that thrust the accomplishments and intelligence of African Americans into the sight of exposition visitors and represented African Americans who actively fought white racism and misinformation about persons of color by demanding equality and allowing their voices to be heard.

Later commemorations of the founding of Jamestown occurred in 1957, denoting the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and in 2007, denoting the four hundredth anniversary. Most interestingly, while there was no acknowledgement of the arrival of Africans to English North America in 1619 at the 1907 Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, there are efforts currently in Congress to create an event to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the

arrival of the first Africans. On February 11, 2016, Virginia Congressmen Bobby Scott, Don Beyer, G. K. Butterfield, and U.S. Senators from Virginia, Tim Kaine and Mark Warner introduced The Four Hundred Years of African American History Act (S. 2548/H.R. 4539).¹ The Four Hundred Years of African American History Act is enjoying popular support and is also co-sponsored by members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including Congressmen John Lewis, other Virginia Congressmen such as Randy Forbes and Scott Rigell, the N.A.A.C.P., including its Director Hilary Shelton, and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. The legislation will create a commission which, according to Bobby Scott, will “be charged with the important task of planning, developing and implementing a series of programs and activities throughout 2019 that fully tells the story of African Americans, their contributions to the fabric of our nation, and their resilience over the last 400 years.”²

According to the House of Representatives version of the legislation, H.R. 4539, from the 114th Congress, introduced on February 11, 2016, the commission had many responsibilities. The commission was tasked with creating programs throughout the United States that appropriately commemorate, recognize, and highlight the contributions of African Americans since their arrival in 1619, “acknowledge the impact of slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination in the United States;” educate the American public about the arrival, history, and accomplishments and contributions of African Americans. Furthermore, the commission was designed to encourage non-governmental organizations throughout the nation to participate in the four hundredth anniversary and celebration, “provide technical assistance to States, localities,

¹ February 11, 2016, Press Release, U.S. Congressmen Bobby Scott’s website, <http://bobbyscott.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/kaine-warner-scott-butterfield-beyer-naacp-introduce-commission-to>; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4539?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22hr4539%5C%22%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=1>

² United States Congressmen Bobby Scott, February 11, 2016, Press Release, U.S. Congressmen Bobby Scott’s website, <http://bobbyscott.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/kaine-warner-scott-butterfield-beyer-naacp-introduce-commission-to>

and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration”, “coordinate and facilitate for the public scholarly research on, publication about, and interpretation of” the arrival of, history of, and contributions of African Americans to the development of the United States, “ensure the commemoration provides a lasting legacy and long-term public benefit by assisting in the development of appropriate programs” and, lastly, “help ensure that the observances of the commemoration are inclusive and appropriately recognize the experiences and heritage of all individuals present at the arrival of Africans in the United States.”³ The legislation and commission are intended to celebrate the vital importance of African Americans to the United States and commemorate their history and contributions, which have too often been neglected by the United States government and historical commemorations of the past.

Reflecting on the importance and momentous nature of the legislation, U.S. Senator Mark Warner stated that “confronting the sins of our nation’s past is the only sure way to move towards a brighter future” and the nation must commit “to telling our entire history – the good and the bad.” Warner acknowledged that in addition to commemorating the contributions of African Americans to the United States, the commission would also “recognize the phenomenal resilience of African Americans, not only in the face of slavery 400 years ago but in the face of racial discrimination in the years that followed.”⁴ U.S. Senator Tim Kaine echoed the message of Warner and other sponsors of the Four Hundred Years of African American History Act during a press release on the day the legislation was introduced in Congress. Kaine stated that the story and history of African Americans “has a lot of pain to it, but it’s a story that has to be told to commemorate that we as a nation – had it not been for 400 years of African American history –

³ H.R. 4539, 114th Congress, 2nd Session, 2015-2016, February 11, 2016, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4539/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22hr4539%5C%22%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=1>

⁴ U.S. Senator Mark Warner, Press Release, February 11, 2016, <http://bobbyscott.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/kaine-warner-scott-butterfield-beyer-naacp-introduce-commission-to>

would be absolutely unrecognizable. What we hope to do with this bill is engage in something we should do to tell the story in a different way than it may have been told 50 to 100 years ago.”⁵

The words of Tim Kaine and other sponsors acknowledged that commemorative events that occurred over one hundred years ago largely ignored African Americans and their vital role in shaping the direction and development of the United States of America. The Jamestown Exposition of 1907, a commemorative event that was initially designed to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, celebrated the white history and heritage of the United States while simultaneously ignoring or minimizing the importance of minorities to the United States, or outright distorting the truth about American minorities and persons of colors. The ways in which various races in American society are portrayed has changed dramatically over time. While the U.S. government is currently introducing plans to commemorate African Americans in 2019, the efforts of 1907 fell extraordinarily short of a fair exhibition on American minorities and persons of color, instead promoting a traditionally white dominant narrative of United States history. The events in the process of being planned for 2019 seek to do a far better job than the 1907 Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition of representing and celebrating the history of black Americans and their rich contributions to the United States.

⁵ U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, Press Release, February 11, 2016, <http://bobbyscott.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/kaine-warner-scott-butterfield-beyer-naacp-introduce-commission-to>

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